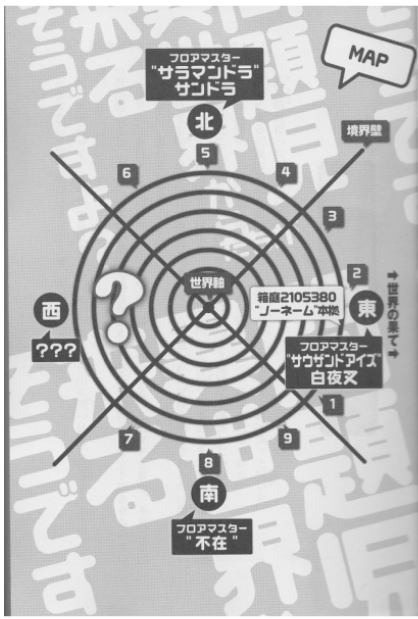
そう……
巨龍召喚
問題児たちが異世界から来るそうですよ？
Tatsunokotarou
竜ノ湖太郎
illustration
天之有
角川スニーカー文庫

白雪姫
や、やだ、見ないでくださいっ！
黒ウサギ
何ッ!?
黒ウサギが
濡れ濡れ
だと!!?
黒ウサギ。
そんな全身
濡らした
格好では、

口絵・本文イラスト／天之有
口絵・本文デザイン／百足屋ユウコ（ムシカゴグラフィクス）


MAP
フロアマスター
"サラマンドラ"
サンドラ
北
境界壁
5
6
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3
2
世界樹
?
箱庭2105380
"ソーネーム"本拠
東
⇒世界の果て⇒
西
???
フロアマスター
"サウザンドアイズ"
白夜叉
1
7
9
8
南
フロアマスター
"不在"

Character
問題児たち、ウサギの話を聞くのです！
問題児たちを誘うホームの新しい支持
黒ウサギ
この世界は面白いか？
問題児その1!
逆廻十六夜
ギフトネーム
"正体不明。"
(ロード・アンノウン)
あら、問題児だなんて心外だわ
問題児その2!
久遠飛鳥
ギフトネーム
"威光。"
……主に「問題」のほうはウサギ以外の私たち
問題児その3
春日部耀
ギフトネーム
"生命の目録。"
(アンノウン・ギフト)
"ノーフォーマー"。
ソーネームの復活のために頑張ります
ジン
コミュニティ"ノーネーム"のリーダー
承りました、マイマスター！
レティシア
元魔王で吸血鬼の箱庭最強種族、青白銀ナイト！
黒ウサギに何を着させようかのぅ？
東の階層支配者、青白銀ホワイトロリ女
白夜叉

Prologue

It was quite rare to have such a sunny day during the rainy season.

Sakamaki Izayoi, while enjoying this early summer morning, looked up to the Sun and mutters:

“Oh? Sunspots? So the Sun really is entering a glacial period?”

His philosophy was "The heavens did not create man above me" and seems to like global warming to global cooling.

Since Izayoi no longer has any obligations to his school, he was wondering if he should lay facing the river while having his flashes of contemplation. But to the eyes of others, this was a very shameful act. If someone he knew saw him in this state, he’ll soon be a laughing stock.

“Ahhh I wonder if there’s anything interesting…..”

Izayoi took down his headphones and heard some noise from the other side. A group of delinquents, wearing long coats with the words “Fighting Spirit” written on them, were being boisterous and in the middle, the delinquents were surrounding a crying boy and forcing him to bow to them in an apologetic manner.

“Oii Oii, this isn’t good. The kid’s really crying! That’s gross; why not just throw it in the river to wash him up?”

“Heh, since we’re gonna wash him up, better strip him first then!”

“Eeeeekkk……!”

The boy was trembling with so much fear that he literally curled into a ball. Sakamaki Izayoi then slowly stood up and directed his gaze towards the group of delinquents who were now kicking and punching the young man.

“Ahhh…bored…I’m SO BORED I WANT TO EXPLODE! IF I SELL MY BOREDOM! I CAN AMASS A SMALL FORTUNE! HEY YOU BRAINLESS MORONS! HOW’S THIS? YOU’LL GIVE ME SOME ENTERTAINMENT AND I’LL GIVE YOU ALL A LONG TERM TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL AS MY GIFT!?”

“Oi! Strip faster and jump in the water will ya?!”

“Tie up his hands as well! So long as he can move his feet, he’s not going to drown!”

It was expected that none of the delinquents would respond back to Izayoi because the latter wasn’t shouting and was merely expressing in a volume that only someone near him could hear.

So obviously, none of Izayoi’s words were heard and whatever Izayoi said were just sent directly to the wind. By now, the young man was being beaten up and his face was full of mud, tears and snot. Very unsightly too look at.

“……..”

Izayoi silently stood up.

He picked up two or three stones near him and threw them while screaming.

“LET ME JOIN YOU GUYSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!!

The entire shore exploded once the rock hits the ground. This wasn't a metaphor, there’s no need for correction.

Exactly as described, the stone was flying with an absurdly high speed of the Third Cosmic Velocity[1], and with a loud roar and a huge cloud of dust blew away the delinquents, the boy and the riverside alike.

“Waaaaaaa!!!”

“It’s….It’s Sakamaki Izayoi! Everyone run!”

“Hel…Help me….”

“Hey! I’m going to throw another!”

While Izayoi smiles refreshingly, every time he threw another rock, it created a small crater. The scene would be akin to that of an airdrop. Faced with such an overwhelming adversary, both the bullies and the bullied were running away in fear.

To avoid confusion, Izayoi did not do this to help the young man being bullied.

It was because Izayoi's personal philosophy is "To suppress and control both the strong and weak."

"Ahahahahahaha! Pathetic! Utterly pathetic! You guys are just bark but no bite!"

Sakamaki Izayoi was hugging his stomach and laughing at the terrified men who were running away from him. He was laughing and rolling or slamming his fist to the ground.

Soon, the area was only filled with Izayoi's laughter and once Izayoi stopped, the area immediately went silent.

Soon, the silence enveloped the river and there was no human movement at all. By now, girls of Izayoi's age should be having their lunch break as Izayoi stood there, silent.

"…..This is really boring!"

Finally, Izayoi uttered out his true feelings.

Even though the reactions of the delinquents and the bullied young man were amusingly ironic, it was not that interesting.

"…..Hm?"

Woosh. The same time he started moving, a strong sideways wind started blowing. A sealed letter was floating with the wind, and after following a very unnatural trajectory, it delivered itself into Izayoi's bag like a thread through the eye of a needle.

"….What in the world was that?"

He took out the mysterious letter.

The recipient's name was written neatly on the envelope as such: "To Sakamaki Izayoi-dono"

Looking around the surroundings, no one was around.

"Amazing. Does that make him a post shoot expert?"

Izayoi smiled and decided to open the contents of the letter.

But at this moment, Izayoi's cell phone rang and he placed the letter in his bag and checked his phone.

[Yaho~ Iza-niichan, skipping school again? At least call the Canaria Family Home, the teachers are all very mad about it.]

[Really? Sorry about that. Maybe next time, they'll make me drop out of the school.]

[Is it alright?]

[Ah. Golden Canary died. So I don't see any reason to go to High School anymore.]

[Really. Well, guess there's no helping it. Although if Iza-niichan were to really go to school willingly, that'll be the shocker.]

"Oh really?" Izayoi laughed.

[Ah, yeah, in fact, someone who was dressed like a lawyer came to the Canaria Family Home. Even gave Iza-niichan Golden Canary's will.]

"Will? Golden Canary's last will?"

Izayoi frowned. Despite living all the way to her deathbed, Izayoi never heard of a last will.

[I found it strange as well, but the signature really is that of Golden Canary-sensei! And the lawyer said that he must hand it to you so shall we make the trip to the Canaria Family Home together?]

"Hmmm…well, I guess we'll go take a look. And tell Homura that the headset is fine."

Pi---the call then ended.

Izayoi stretched himself while looking at the gloomy sky.

---Tomorrow onward, it'll be Golden Week. Since there's no reason to stay in school, there aren't any consecutive holidays. From a perspective, this is one of the more easy-going habits of the Japanese.

Chapter 1

Part 1

“The Edge of the World”, Tritonis Falls.

Pa pu! Water splashed all around as Izayoi made his way to the river bank.

While holding onto small flaxen buds in his hand, he went to retrieve his headphones and school uniform, which he had taken off before diving into the river, and wore them magnificently. Izayoi then shook his head to get rid of the water stuck in his hair, turned and sat on the shore while asking Kuro Usagi.

“Kuro Usagi, are you sure this is the Aqua Fran?”

“Yes! This most definitely is the Aqua Fran!”

Kuro Usagi put up her index finger and responded cutely while Izayoi nods.

"Is that so? Looks like locking on to the most clustered thriving region of the river was the right choice. So what's left is to make this thing bloom and the game will be cleared.....but, this game really does not have any specified method for its clearing conditions?"

A (rarely) troubled look came over Izayoi as he sat upon a huge rock while lightly tossing the flax colored flower buds on top of his head.

What he had meant by the method for its clearing conditions, refers to the current Gift Game that he was currently participating in.

Taking out the goatskin parchment from his school jacket's pocket---the [Geass Roll] was written as follows:

＜＜GIFT GAME: “FLOWERS OVER THE LAKE”＞＞
Participant(s): Sakamaki Izayoi of the “No Names”

Game Master: “The Lord of the Tritonis Falls”, Shirayuki-hime

Clearing Condition(s): *Obtain the Aqua Fran and make it bloom.

Defeat Condition(s): *The player can't satisfy the clearing conditions until noon. *The player doesn't have more conditions to clear the game.

Stage details: *The players can't leave the radius of one kilometer from the Tritonis Falls. *The host has confirmed that the Aqua Fran can be bloomed in the Game territory.

Oath: *Based on the rules, the participants of the Gift Game will be willing to bet their pride and flag of their respective community*

Scanning through the contents of the [Geass Roll] once more, Izayoi tilted his head once more.

"Requesting for me to make the Aqua Fran bloom……Since the Aqua Fran is a flower exclusive to Little Garden, I can't say that I have sufficient knowledge on this."

"Ah…… although Kuro Usagi had come along with Izayoi-san to the game, but she cannot tell you as the referee about the details…… but Kuro Usagi can guarantee that this game is definitely legit. So, the rest is up to you, Izayoi-san!"

"Fight on!!!"—Ignoring Kuro Usagi's shout of encouragement that he took for a mere breeze brushing past his ears, Izayoi combed his hair back and lay down on the huge rock.

The water was gradually seeping into his school jacket from his already wet and soaking T-shirt as he leaned his back upon the slab of rock and that was a feeling that felt indescribably terrible for Izayoi. It was so bad that the soak in the river was much more

comfortable than this.

Besides, today's sunny weather was perfect for swimming.

Although the current was strong, it was also enjoyable in a sense as well.

In the swampy part of the river where the rate of flow in the river was much slower, Izayoi had spotted many other queer creatures and plants besides the Aqua Fran, which had thrived in clusters, that he had not seen before. And that caused him to be curious as it tickled his thirst for knowledge. If it were not for the gift game, passing the day by listening to the tranquil sounds of the water flow while inspecting specimens that he picked up from the river might just be relaxing and nice too.

(…….If Ojou-sama and Kasukabe saw it, they'll definitely say "Just like an old man.")

Continuing to look up at the sky, he gave a short throaty laugh. In the eyes of others, this might be a hobby of the old but Izayoi did not agree with that line of thought.

It would always be a pleasure to explore the unknown, no matter which realm it might lead to.

To be able to experience things that you have not come across before, that too held a special allure.

Izayoi always felt that those people who couldn't be touched by that sort of beauty might just be the ones who have aged.

But his current curiosity had all been focused upon the flaxen buds of the Aqua Fran that were in his hands.

(According to O-Chibi-sama, the flowers are able to purify and cleanse water. Looking at the waters from the streets to the (water) fountains, it flows on continuously. Although from here, I can immediately guess that the thriving grounds would be beside the river, but……)

His thoughts broke off.

—Being a gift game made by a Demon Lord, it is not a requirement to consider if the participants are not knowledgeable enough on the subject.

---Gift games were games made for the Gods and Demons and the participants' knowledge or power had never been a factor of consideration during the creation of the game. Moreover, the origins of Gift Games had been [Various Trials Issued to the Human Race by Asura Gods] that have been modified. In other words, even if the Participant's ability or knowledge aren't of a sufficient level, it would just count as the Participant's loss for being inexperienced and or having gone through insufficient training.

Due to reasons above, it was legitimate to use a plant unique to the world of Little Garden to set as a trial for Sakamaki Izayoi who had come from another world. And Izayoi had simply concluded that he wasn't knowledgeable enough about this world.

(To even let the flowers bloom in such a short period of time…it's not even possible.)

Indeed, this was where the problem arises.

The rules specifically states that the Aqua Fran must bloom but there was a time limit. To win the game, one must make the flower bloom within the time limit.

Although individual plants have their own unique time and place to bloom according to the seasonal change, but most flower buds would require at least three to four hours to bloom and the total time available to the game was one hour, to expect the flower to bloom should have been impossible.

(Hmmm this would be a violation of the game but Kuro Usagi assured that there was no problem. So that means there will be special ways to make the flower bloom.)

However if it required a method that was unique to this flowers' blooming behavioral pattern, Izayoi would have insufficient knowledge on how to clear the game.

Okay, so what should I do now? Izayoi continued to look at the sky as he lay upon the rock while wracking his brains.

Kuro Usagi bounded over with a *Doing* and bent over Izayoi's face as she spoke:

"What's the matter? Are you going to give up?"

"Don't be absurd, if I surrender here, that'll mean admitting defeat

to Ojou-sama and Kasukabe. And that is something that I will not give way about.”

Izayoi responded without hesitation with a harrumph.

"Yea, not likely at all right~" Kuro Usagi can only smile wryly.

Come to think about it, why did Izayoi come to participate in this Gift game?

As for the full reason, it dates back a few days ago.

Part 2

— It was one month after fighting the Black Percher (Pest).

Izayoi and the others were in their community and were discussing future plans in the [No Name]'s Conference Hall.

A long table sat in the middle of the hall and starting in the order from the head of the table sat Jin Russel, Sakamaki Izayoi, Kudou Asuka, Kasukabe Yō, Kuro Usagi, the maid, Leticia, and the (pubescent) den mother and fox girl, Lily.

This sitting arrangement was done out of formality of the No Names.

Sitting in the position of second-in-command was none other than Sakamaki Izayoi due to the various exploits such as securing a water source as well as the retrieval of a lost comrade etc. Sitting next to Izayoi was Kudou Asuka despite looking a little miffed, but she did not voice any objections to it.

As for the person who's their leader, Jin who represented their Community, he was seating himself down with a stiff and nervous look on his face.

Seeing Jin's actions, Izayoi gave a loud short laugh before making a dig at him:

"What's the matter? Though you're sitting at a seat much higher than mine, why do you look so uncomfortable?"

“Be-Because this is the leader’s seat? Being tense is to be expected…”

Jin clutched his robes tightly as he gave his retort but that wasn't the only reason.

According to the common knowledge in the world of Little Garden, for one to seat upon the top position, it had to be based upon the premise of [Being able to participate in the Trials for the Community]. Other than that, there was also the amount of [Contribution], [Dedication] and [Influence] etc that are must-haves too.

And since Jin had yet to achieve something that can be counted as a victory in battle or sorts, he would naturally feel inferior to the others.

Hearing Jin's words that were clearly reserved and not in totality, Izayoi drooped his shoulders, seemingly irritated by his behavior.

"I say, O-chibi-sama, I've said it many times, you are now the leader of "No Name", which is equivalent to being a living brand name. All of our victories have been under your banner and your name as we spread the word to the outside. If the you who's getting so well-known out there can't even sit properly in the leader's chair, then that would be so wrong."

"Yes! It's just as Izayoi-san says! In fact, this month's gift games have all been sent with Master Jin's name as the recipient!"

Ta Da! Kuro Usagi took out three letters sealed with the wax seal of the different communities' insignia to show to everyone. Shockingly, two of them were not sent to Participants but were invitations for them to attend as the "guest of honor". And that was an unprecedented treatment for a community like No Name since they did not even have a banner.

Kuro Usagi had a look of bliss as she smiled and carefully hugged the three invitation letters to her chest.

"It has been a bitter three years…and finally our Community is starting to receive invitation letters and it's addressed to Master Jin's name! So please lift up your head and puff up your chest as you sit upon the top position alright?!" Kuro Usagi was being more hyped than usual.

But Jin seemed to be even more depressed as he bent his head lower.

"But that…"

(…was not my effort.)

Jin was about to finish but was cut off by Asuka.

"So what? Why are we assembled here today? To discuss about the invitation letters?"

"Ye……Yes, that is needless to say. But before touching on the topic

of the invitation letters, I would like everyone to know about the current situation of our community and so I called everyone together today…… Lily, Kuro Usagi, please make your reports.”

“Understood.”

“Un…Un, I will try my best.”

Jin took off the dark gloomy expression as he looked to Lily and Kuro Usagi, prompting them with his eyes.

Tidying her Japanese style pinafore, Lily straightened herself as she began to read the report.

“Well…… if we see our total savings, we are currently doing fine in the short term. I guess that if we maintain our lifestyle with the barest minimum, we’ll be fine for about a year even under the worst case scenario.”

“Eh? Why did the problem disappear so suddenly?”

“Because according to the evaluation of the Demon Lord last month, <<Black Percher>> whom Izayoi-sama and the others managed to defeat was ranked at the 5 digits. In addition, that battle had been a task asked of us by the [Floor Master] themselves, hence the digits in the reward had also grown considerably. And that's what Shiroyasha-sama had informed us. So with that, for some time to come, we may all eat full full!”

Lily cheerfully said that as she wagged her two tails.

However, Leticia who sat beside her frowned and gave a light warning:

“Lily, please don’t say it in that way.”

“Oh…Ah! So…sorry!”

Lily who noticed that her speech was far too casual bent her head as her ears went red and was even wagging her prided tails in a flustered manner.

Yō gave a wry smile as she urged Lily to continue:

“Five Digits… Is that possible from the community [Grim Grimoire Hamelin] with no HQ[2]?”

“Un. Normally, it would not be possible to get a number if it comprised of only three members. But it is said that the evaluation had been based upon the fact that [Black Death Demon Lord] is a God class spirit and the level of the Gift Game is difficult enough to make the community be recognized as a 5-digit.”

Hearing this for the first time, Izayoi then got curious.

“Oh? The difficulty of the Gift Game is also relatable with the numbers?”

“Yes! What we call as Gift games are originally the trials set by Gods and Buddhas to gift their grace upon the challengers. While in the world of Little Garden, those simplified trials that have been modified by formalities are called Gift Games, while the difficulty of the Game is directly representative of the Host’s own power level.”

MhmMhm Izayoi nodded his head while listening to Kuro Usagi’s explanation.

---It’s said that in Little Garden, the ranking of the Community did not increase just because it possessed numerous strong members.

Other than the 7 digits which is the lowest of the lower floors, each floor had its own condition to be met.

“Although there are many ways to be promoted, but let’s give an example to make it simple---[If we want to go up to 6-digit level, we have to fulfill a trial made by the Floor Master.],

[If we want to go up to a 5-digit level we need to have other 3 communities of 6 digits under us, hang our flags at all these Outer Gates and be able to host a Gift Game where a hundred communities or more participates under an oath to our flag]….umm I think this should be good enough.”

Basically speaking,

6-digit Community required the ability to participate as a player while a

5-digit Community required the Community to possess the ability to host Games.

And that also meant that---the [Authority of the Host Master] that a 6-digit Demon Lord used would be much different from the scale

and quality that a 5-digit Demon Lord would use.

Kuro Usagi put up her finger and added seriously:

“The power difference between a 6-digit ranked Demon Lord and a 5-digit ranked Demon Lord’s are like the Earth and Sky. If you’re facing a 6-digit ranked Demon Lord, it is still possible to defeat it with a group made of strong members or an organization. However, you will not stand a chance if you’re facing a 5-digit ranked Demon Lord using the same concept. Demon Lords of the five digits are also acknowledged by those who hold the power of the [Host] as a strong force to reckon with. For example, though [Black Death Demon Lord] whom you guys have fought against was just a new face in the Demon Lords, the Gift game which was a sinister trial enough to even cover the entire world in darkness, by the sealing of the Sun-class Star Spirit.”

After Kuro Usagi finished her explanation, Izayoi had also taken on a serious tone that was very unlike him as he concurred with her point:

“Yeah…if Pest had been more capable, then we would already have had the end game when the Trial Jurisdiction was used to pause the game… If she had foreseen Kuro Usagi triggering the Trial Jurisdiction, then that will be quite a praiseworthy feat……but her performance at the negotiation table was really terrible.”

Izayoi laughed while giving a sniff at that.[3]

Lily lifted her head as she guided the conversation back on track:

“Well…yeah. Thanks to everyone’s efforts that defeated the Demon Lord of the 5-digits, we have obtained the rewards from the request[4] and hence for Izayoi-sama and the others, we will be given another Gift besides the monetary compensation.”

“Ah? Really?”

“YES! Regarding that part we will be notified about it soon, so please wait in anticipation!”

“Oh?” Izayoi’s reply had a tinge of delight and the other two had the same reaction.

Although it was unknown what Gift it was, but considering that it requires taking down a Demon Lord to get it, it must be something

“interesting”. Jin also nodded his head happily, prompting Lily to continue her report.

“Well, Lily, can you update us on the situation of our farm’s revival?”

The instant Jin finished his sentence;

Lily’s face brightened up considerably and seemed to sparkle as she started her report in a completely different energetic attitude:

“Ye……Yes! It’s wonderful! Thanks to the daily efforts of Deen and Mel, our farm is about 25% re-formed into an arable state! If this continues, our lands growing food supply will increase to more than sufficient! Although we do need a bit more time to tidy up the whole farm and orchard lands, but if we prioritize the planting of leafy-vegetables, tubers and fruit, I think we would be able to reap the results within a few months’ time!”

Lily’s ears perked up in delight for it was truly a miracle that the once barren and desert-like land of the No Names is now reviving at god speed.

Seeing Lily’s happy expression, Asuka also fluffed her hair in pride.

“Of course, Deen and Mel have worked hard without rest, so it’s natural that the reconstruction process of the farm has yielded excellent results.”

“Fufufu.” Asuka lightly laughed.

--- Melin and Deen whom she had mentioned were Asuka’s new partners that have made a contract with her;

The fairy with a pointy hat and a dress, Mel who possess the spirit level from the accomplishment of developing lands.

The metallic golem made out of god-rare metal[5], Deen who could move forever.

The reason why Asuka was sitting next to Izayoi was precisely because she too, had managed to achieve great feats in regards to the farm.

Even though the water provided was due to the Gift Izayoi obtained[6], it was Asuka’s presence that led to the help from the

Gift of an Earth Fairy and the huge horse power that ploughed the lands to make the revival a success.

“They were very hardworking, especially Deen. Night after night, other than the times when Asuka-sama left to participate in Gift Games, it has always been at the fields to tidy it up! And working tirelessly to mix the young saplings and old construction materials that were decomposed by Mel, it’s a great help!”

“Fufu, to be able to feel the happiness from others sure is great.”

“Be careful not to overwork your subordinates though, Ojou-sama.”[7]

Izayoi wryly responded to Asuka.

Taking the opportunity before the atmosphere could even start to deteriorate, Kuro Usagi frantically urged the discussion to continue.

“C-can we get back to the main topic? The farm is doing well, so I was thinking of creating a special sector for special plants.”

“Special sector?”

“Yes! It’s a region where we can cultivate spirit trees or spirit herbs like…”

“Mandragora plants?”

“Mandrake plants?”

“Man Eating plants?”

“Yes♪ Ho-Hold on, the last one was strange!!? We can’t let the children raise something dangerous like a “Man Eating plant”! Mandragora and Mandrake are dangerous species that can kill instantly[8] so it’s completely out!”

“Oh really? Then we can only come to a compromise. How about Rabbit Eater then?”

“Was that a harassment directed at Kuro Usagi?!”

“Why must you provoke Kuro Usagi?”

UuRiaaa! Kuro Usagi’s rabbit ears are now half vertical and in a fit of rage.

Lecticia drooped her shoulders helplessly as she noted that the discussion would make no headway if things were left as it were. So, she turned to Izayoi and the others to drop the most straightforward hint:

“Basically, Masters (Ojou and Goshujin-samas) need to get the right plants and livestock.”

“Livestock? As in sheep and cows?”

“Correct. Coincidentally, the [Draco Greif] Alliance from the South had just sent us a letter of invitation to the Harvest Festival. Because it’s a Matsuri hosted by an Alliance, there should be quite a big collection of farm produce as well as livestock and there would be many gift games hosted simultaneously. Some of them would have prizes like rare saplings and livestock. And it would be a great chance to increase our productivity.”

“So that’s how it is!” With that, the problem children nodded.[9]

Breaking the seal on the [Draco Greif] Alliance’s invitation letter, Kuro Usagi gave a brief summary of the contents after scanning through it with her eyes.

“The invitation letter this time is in hope for us to participate in the Eve celebrations for the Harvest Festival and the expenses for the traveling and accommodations will be settled by the Host- Seeing it from the perspective that we are of a [No Name Community], this can be seen as a VIP treatment that far exceeds our expectations! The location is one of the top few views of South Side: [The Underwood Waterfalls]! It’s allure will not lose to the [The Edge of the World] with its Great Tree and the pristine river that will be used as a stage[10]! Kuro Usagi guarantees that all of you will be having fun!”

Kuro Usagi said that while puffing up her chests. It was rare for her to give such a strong recommendation and high praise to a location like that.

Izayoi and the others exchanged a look before turning back to the excited Kuro Usagi and wryly saying:

“Oh……For it to be able to get the guarantee and high praise of the [Highborn of Little Garden], it sure is quite a feat. I guess that it must be quite a magnificent stage right?……What do you think, Ojou-sama?”

“Ara, of course! After all, it is what the [Highborn of Little Garden] highly recommended! It must have been dazzling and full of mystique…..right, Kasukabe-san?”

“Un. But if Kuro Usagi’s recommendation were to be unsatisfactory…we’ll just have to call her [Highborn of Little Garden(lol)] from then on.”

“Huh?! [Highborn of Little Garden(lol)]??! What’s with that ridiculous name that sounds like something made for some stupid bloodline Highborn?! We [Moon Rabbits] are nobles of a pure bloodline that have moral integrity, a chaste noble and pure heart that is willing to sacrifice for our dedication!”

“A nobility that risks their lives for their dedication sure sounds fishy enough to me.”

Izayoi gave a loud laugh as he made a dig at Kuro Usagi and she had puffed her cheeks angrily, turning her head away seemingly in a tantrum.

Jin smiled worriedly at the scene before coughing a little to get the attention back.

“Anyways, regarding the general direction of our Community, we have covered most of it already……but there’s one problem left.”

“Problem?”

“Yep, the festival starts in 20 days and including the eve of the festival, it would be a total of 25 days and almost a month. Games of this scale are rare and if possible, I would have wanted all of you to participate in it, but I cannot risk having our main force leaving the Community defenseless, so I’m hoping that a person would stay with Leticia here……”

“Not me.”

“Not me.”

“Not me.”

The problem children answered immediately, without a hint of hesitation.

Jin couldn’t help but to swallow the rest of the words that didn’t manage to get out of his mouth in time and as for the three problem children, they were gazing at him nonchalantly as though their answers were only to be expected.

However, it was only on this matter that he could not give way upon. Precisely because their Community had started to gather its true strength that the defense portion was a critical area to be enforced on. After all, it was also possible for malicious communities like [Fores Garo] who kidnapped children; or Demon Lords that were the manifestations of natural disasters in Little Garden to appear.

Jin leaned forward as he posed a suggestion to Izayoi and the others:

“Then since that is the case, can I ask of everyone to at least compromise with a few days where we are all together?”

“What do you mean?”

“We’ll send two to the eve of the festival, and when the festival starts, the other will be joining the two of you and after spending a week together, only two can remain while one will have to return…... How about that?”

The problem children gave a *Uu* sound as they looked at each other.

“That means one person will be able to enjoy the entire course right? Then how would we decide upon which one?”

“Well…”

Of course it would be decided by the person’s standing in the Community---was what Jin wanted to say but he decided against it since even though this is common knowledge for the people of Little

Garden, it may not be the same for the problem children.

Just when Jin was in a pinch, trying to find a way to plead to their better natures, it was Izayoi's turn to lean forward to propose his plan:

"Well then, how about we have a little competition to decide who is going to the festival for the longest number of days?"

"Competition?"

"Ara. A competition sounds interesting. What kind of competition?"

"How's this?……We'll see who gets the most number of trophies and or aid for the community before the eve of the festival? Once the time is up, we'll compare our achievements and the one with the most results and the most possibility to get more trophies[11] in the Harvest Festival will get to be there the longest…… How's that? It's fair and simple right?"

Asuka and Yō looked at each other after hearing Izayoi's idea. With that condition, it could be said to be a 50-50 chance.

And they both nodded.

"Very well. I'll agree."

"Un. I won't lose."

Asuka had a fearless smile on her face while Yō had shown a fighting spirit in her as she spoke up.

And the problem children begin to have a competition amongst themselves to go to the harvest festival by [Draco Greif]…….

Part 3

……And hence, we're back to Izayoi playing the gift game by Shirayuki-hime.

Strangely, Izayoi's achievements haven't been that great.

Kicking the water with her bare feet, Kuro Usagi sighed as she sat beside the river, waiting.

"It was unexpected that the news of Izayoi-san's combat results have been spread together with the evaluation of Jin-bocchan…… Due to the combat experience that others have heard by now, it's inevitable that they would reject inviting you for a game, although you could also blame it on bad timing. Luckily, Shiroyasha-sama had prepared the game for you this time but future games that would allow you to participate in may not come so often now…"

"……."

---That's right, for Izayoi's name had also started to spread along with the news of the new evaluation of the [No Name] Community. As a result, Izayoi's right to participate in games has been restricted and can only rely on [Thousand Eyes] Shiroyasha to introduce the Games for him.

Then again, not wanting to fight Izayoi in gift games is understandable as his battle prowess is great and his combat records of his previous enemies have been astounding.

The humongous Great serpent goddess who resided in the "Edge of the World".

Algol, one of the most powerful Star class Ex-demon lords in existence.

Weser, Black Percher's trusted aide, who was a demon that held the Gift of [Divinity].

Having defeated these foes with insane strength on his own, Izayoi's strength definitely wasn't something that belonged in the lower levels.

After all that is said and done, the hosts were people who wanted to

make a living, if they knew they'd be defeated, they wouldn't allow his participation. And besides that, Izayoi had little interest in the mundane and boring gift games of theirs anyways.

Izayoi stretched a little, shrugged his shoulders and looked towards Kuro Usagi.

"Forget it. After all, bullying others isn't something to be proud of especially when it comes to extorting others to do a favor for you, it sure isn't right. No point ruining the reputation that was earned right? After all, our Community is a group that upholds Justice while striving towards the goal of [Defeating Demon Lords] so avoiding the battles that would surely be won would also show that we are very tolerant and a situation that we can use to our advantage."

"You are right on that. But is the Gift obtainable from this Game able to cause a reversal of the current tide in the results ranking?"

"About that……? Well, this can be called a part of the fun after I clear the game."

Izayoi laughed out with alacrity.

Pata Pata Kuro Usagi however, was not amused and continued to kick at the water.

To her, she could see that Izayoi possessed the strength and for her to be unable to introduce the games of his calibre, it was really vexing. Because Kuro Usagi truly believed that Izayoi was someone who could definitely build a name for himself through the victories in stages far larger than this and obtain very rare trophies at the same time.

Kuro Usagi pursed her lips and kicked the water harder.

"Even though Shiroyasha-sama introduced the game for you this once and helped to solve the problem…Kuro Usagi is still unsatisfied. If we lost in a game that we participated in, Kuro Usagi would be able to accept the loss. But to remove the rights to participate in future games….This…This is like---"

"-always relying on others." Although she wanted to say it, Kuro Usagi restrained herself.

"Yeah, yeah." Izayoi gave an expression that looked irritated by

something troublesome as he scratched his head before looking Kuro Usagi in the eye.

“Kuro Usagi.”

“Ye…Yes?”

“I like your humble attitude, but if you’re too pessimistic, it’s not good. The current situation is really quite uninteresting, but as I’ve already said, it is not hopeless and still within my calculations. So can you stop your inane bursts of self-depreciation? It’s annoying.”

Ah Uu Kuro Usagi’s ears drooped as she didn’t dare make another squeak.

After all, Izayoi was busy with the solving of the Game and to hear someone grumbling beside him was really getting on his nerves for it broke the train of thoughts. Placing aside the problem of the pessimism, the bigger problem was the lack of knowledge.

Not wanting to be a bother to Izayoi any further, a depressed Kuro Usagi stood up and intended to hide in the woods for the mean time.

Looking at the depressed Kuro Usagi, Izayoi gave a small sigh before calling out to her.

“Hey, Kuro Usagi.”

“Huh…yes?”

“Let’s have fish for tonight’s menu.”

“Hah?” Kuro Usagi turned her head and tilted her rabbit ears.

Izayoi points to the center of the river.

“Over there, if you caught the fish there and grill them, they’ll be delicious. If I’m not wrong, they are fresh water Horse-Mackerel. I want to try them…… please?”

After hearing out Izayoi, Kuro Usagi smiled and nodded her head.

“Yes! Understood! Tonight, Kuro Usagi will answer Izayoi-san’s wish for tonight’s dinner and take on the responsibility of cooking them personally!”

“Un. I’ll be waiting.”

Izayoi laughed as Kuro Usagi jumped excitedly as she headed to the path in the forest. It seems that her ears were able to pick up the situation from anywhere and it wouldn’t make a difference to leave the scene.

Come to think about it, those rabbit ears sure are the same as ever, showing her expressions so clearly from its movements, though seeing her sudden change made him dazed for a moment, nevertheless, Izayoi was able to fully concentrate now.

As the Sun slowly climbed in the skies and the intensity of the Sunlight that shone into the grove started to increase, it was clear that the Sun was soon reaching its zenith. Based on his estimations, Izayoi concluded that he had probably around 30 minutes left.

[If I don’t start anything soon, time would run out for me….. That being said, it’s not like he had enough clues that could be called clues in the first place.]

Resting a moment longer, Izayoi sighed and re-read the geass roll and as he managed to link up the pieces of information that he missed the first few times, he found that the key points and important details were finally emerging and started to have some queries about the contents of the [Geass Roll].

(Judging from the rules, this is the part where it becomes an intelligence game. So I should be able to get the answer if I piece all the information together and compare them with cross references.)

The first part that Izayoi was mindful about was the game’s name, “Flowers over the lake”

What can be confirmed is that the Aqua Fran is a plant that only grows on river banks. But the game is marked “Flowers over the lake”. This meant that the difference of “lake” and “river”[12] suggests a special environment is involved.

The second thing is the clear conditions. It is only written as “Obtain the Aqua Fran and make it bloom”, nothing else. This definitely has another meaning hidden in it.

After which, there is a difference between “buds” and the actual “blooming” part.

Hence, the “buds over the lake” would bloom to make “flowers over the lake”.

In other words, the Aqua Fran would bloom if placed over water.

“The main thing is these three problems. So if I were to link them all up…”

• What did a lake possess which a river doesn’t?

• The flower buds weren’t to be submerged but a type of flower that blooms on the water surface.

• There isn’t a limit to where the place can be for the flower to blossom.

Amassing the information together, a solution became apparent to Izayoi.

“The method to make the flower bloom is… [A change in the water depth], that means I need to change the environment. The Aqua Fran is only living by the river but if a sudden surge of water were to happen like rainfall, the environment would be changed due to the increase in the river’s depth; or it could also be the situation whereby the buds were washed to the deeper areas and due to the survival instinct imprinted in the flower, it would cause the bud to bloom at the water surface……. That should be it.”

“Correct.”

“……Hmm?” Izayoi turned his head. It was a voice that was familiar to him but he couldn’t remember where.

But the person was someone he’d never seen before.

Her beautiful black glossy hair was held up by a tri-colored flower hairpin, wearing a white, elegant kimono with flower patterns and as she walked in that somewhat melancholic steps, the sleeves would also sway with her movements. Using a nonchalant gaze as she observed Izayoi, she moved closer and stopping at a hair’s breath away from him where her fringe and breath could already touch him, she stared at him while giving a very mischievous and brazen smile

“My my, you sure are a weird child. Not only do you have the ability to knock me out, but you’re also a smart one. No wonder

Shiroyasha praised you constantly and shows much interest.”

“……”

Izayoi blinked thrice as he re-evaluated the beautiful woman who was standing so close that they could practically feel each other breaths on the other’s face.

…..but he honestly had no idea who she was. Beautiful facial features and despite wearing a kimono, it was still possible to make out that nice hour-glass body and though most parts of her were clothed thickly, it was still giving off a charm of its own.

Normal men would be intoxicated by the sheer beauty at such a close distance and lose their senses.

But Izayoi was now intrigued out of sheer curiosity that triumphed over his other thoughts.

“……Who are you?”

“What a rude man. Have you forgotten the lady that you ruthlessly kicked on her stomach? Or have you kicked every female that you have come across after arriving in the world of Little Garden?”

After hearing her sarcasm, Izayoi finally recalled, for no matter how slow a person was, they should already catch on by then.

Izayoi stared at the lady’s figure while widening his eyes.

“You’re that snake? But that’s not right, just now you were still a snake!”

“Hah. Well, there isn’t a reason to turn to my human form. Compared to that “snake snake snake snake snake” is annoying, one should at least remember the name of the Host of the game they participate in right?! Baka!”

Hearing her, Izayoi looked at the geass roll.

The roll stated that the host was Shirayuki-hime.

Izayoi widened his eyes.

“Shirayuki-hime….You mean the one who was used as a live-sacrifice in the yasha pool…ah wait, hold on. You’re the one that Shiroyasha granted divinity? Then there should be a shrine

there…?”

“About that……So what? Asking questions like this is pointless. You’ve solved the game right? Hurry up and finish it before you lose. There’s still less than fifteen minutes to go you know?”

Even so, Shirayuki-hime covered her mouth as she giggled, her attitude wasn’t the least bit nervous as she still believed in her win.

Simply put, the Aqua Fran buds required a lake to bloom, but even if the depth was just the right condition in Tritonis Falls, the flow velocity was too strong and there were no natural lakes here. In addition, the river flows all the way down to “The Edge of the World”. Even if it were Izayoi, he might not be able to be safe from the fall.

Shirayuki-hime then gently spoke beside Izayoi’s ear.

“Things aren’t looking good you know? Might as well surrender now. If you are a good boy and apologize to me for your rudeness, I’ll give you a flower. That way, you would be able to keep up your haughty look in front of Shiroyasha and the girls right?”

“No way. If I had the guts to surrender to snake-girl and return with a flower that you have given to me out of pity, it will make the Ojou-sama there laugh and she’ll hang up the flower with a plaque saying 'The evidence that Sakamaki Izayoi has embarrassed himself is here' mounted in the conference hall.”

Izayoi said jokingly as he shrugged his shoulders.

Of course Asuka wouldn’t be that harsh.

….But if Asuka were to hear of this…

“You want it? You really want it? If so, we’ll just take a commemorative photo and frame it then!”

Though he might have some veins popping near his temple, he would have answered with a smile.

Feeling a little wistful about the lost opportunity to have their synchronized banter in this current place, Izayoi jumped down from the huge rock, as he gave a loud hearty laugh.

“Then again, I never thought the snake would be a bishoujo.”

“Surprised?”

“Of course, but it is a nice bonus…… Do you still remember the contract if I win?”

Izayoi laughed fearlessly.

“Hmph.” Shirayuki-hime sneered.

“Of course….In fact, if you can win this……. I, Shirayuki-hime, will be under your subjugation and be your servant.”

“For real? You’ll do anything I say?”

“Of course. You can split open my stomach and eat my liver or you can rip my clothes off and tie me up with chains. You can also defile my purity and enjoy my tears….So long as you are my master, I will satisfy your desires.”

Shirayuki-hime used her hand and pressed on her breasts, as she gave a challenging smile, confident that Izayoi would lose.

Izayoi nodded, satisfied with the answer and looked to the forest. He then stretched his arm, as if to measure the distance.

“Well, I guess I’ll just have to solve this impossible problem……step by step. In front of your very eyes.”

“What?”

“Ah, right, before I solve it for you….Did you know about the “Ten Labors of Heracles? I heard that it’s a Gift Game that really exists in the South Side.”

“Of course. The ten labors were very famous.”

Even if it were of different mythologies, it was still understandable that Shirayuki-hime would still have heard of it.

“The 10 labors” were done by the legendary hero, Heracles. In order to atone for his crimes of murdering his family, he had to defeat and overcome opponents like the Lernaen hydra, mares of Diomedes, Cerberus and many other impossible tasks, a Gift Game based on Greek mythology and is one of the most difficult games in Little Garden.

“And despite having required to do ten labors, Heracles was also

made to do two more, due to 2 of them being accused of flouting the rules, so it's a total of twelve labors. And the Fifth labor, the "Augean stables", is considered as a test of intelligence and his ability to adapt to the situation.

---The requirement was [to clean out the stables that housed 3,000 cattle within a day when it hadn't seen cleaning for more than thirty years.]

And it's a very disgusting and humiliating labor. So what did Heracles do? Using his crazy strength---**He . re . routed . the . river . and . let . the . water . flow . down . and . made . it . wash . the . stable . for . him . do . you . understand**?"

Because Shirayuki-hime understood, her face soon turned pale as Izayoi showed a sly grin.

"Oi…oi, are you serious?"

"Yeah, I'm always serious."

Izayoi went near the river and lifted his right leg up and dropped it down hard.

At once, a huge shockwave swept the river bank and formed a crater. And the crater continued to move in a straight line, seemingly like land mines that have been planted in advance, fragments of rocks and soil were spat out of the ground as it travelled forth. The strong force that seemed to pierce the entire forest was continuing to extend forward and the river began to flow to the crater formed by the impact as well.

It's as though a canal was created instantly.

"AHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA" Izayoi laughed loudly and taking a leap forward as though he wanted to stand before the turbid waters that were rushing into the water canal as he spread his arms and proudly proclaimed .

"If there isn't a lake here, I just have to make the course of the river change to make one appear♪"

Shirayuki-hime was shocked to the point where even her feet were unsteady.

"That's right! Heracles used his might to change the river's course

and used it to wash the stable and the cattle of Augeas!!!”

If Izayoi mimicked the method used for the “Augean stables” and literally broke the river formation -- without doubt, at least half of Shirayuki’s territory would be ruined.

Shirayuki-hime woke up from her shock and screamed.

“HEY! STOP THAT YOU CRAZY KID!!!”

But it’s too late. Izayoi was always serious.

Serious to the point where he was pretty much excited about it.

After all, one of his mottos was “No matter what you do, be it a prank or not, always be serious about it.” This is how serious Izayoi was.

As Izayoi made a revolution before connecting his fist to the earth--- The punch that would gorge out rivers and mountains had immediately gorged out a crater in the forest. The crater that looked like the vent of a volcano. As the ruckus that would have led others to believe that a terraforming was occurring at that very moment started to spread into the surroundings, the spray of water from the river started to pour in like a waterfall as it started to fill the crater.

---The lord of the Tritonis Falls has once again underestimated him. Or to be exact, she could not understand Sakamaki Izayoi well.

Sakamaki Izayoi…. The world’s most powerful problem child.

Chapter 2

Part 1

“Damn, ever since I came to Little Garden, there have been many incidents involving water.”

Water dripped down from Izayoi’s school uniform as he was wringing it dry while making his way to the rendezvous point. Ever since he came to Little Garden, he had gotten himself wet a couple of times. Hence that would explain why his movements could be said to be much more skillful.

Walking along the abandoned pathway that hasn’t been repaired, Izayoi reached an abandoned area that was devoid of inhabitants at the moment but was soon alerted by the screeching, loud sound of houses being destroyed.

Patting off the dust and sand that covered his body, he lifted his brows in surprise.

(What could have made that sound….)

KABOOM! Violently bursting through the doors that were already decaying, he sped up his pace towards the direction of the ruckus. Since this is a deserted place, there shouldn’t be anyone living or coming here.

These ruins had been due to the Greatest Natural Disasters of Little Garden---the trace of the Demon Lords’ passing could still be seen everywhere, and it was so bad that bandits that preferred to prey on those that were already in down times wouldn’t even consider coming here. The once great and powerful community was nothing but a shell of its former glory as only ruins and withered trees remained.

(Just what is that noise?) As Izayoi silently trudged through the road as the noise continued.

Well, that’s pretty high profile for a bandit. Izayoi laughed.

“—DDDDEEEEEEENNNNNNN!!!!!”

The culprit finally revealed itself. Beside it, the culprit’s master also gave a sharp command.

“Deen, I’ve told you many times that you can only shout if you’re fighting.”

“….Deen.”

The giant automaton responded softly.

Incredibly, as Deen’s voice got softer, his body size shrank accordingly.

Izayoi drooped his shoulders and walked over to Asuka, disappointed.

“Ara…Izayoi-kun, what are you doing in a place like this?”

“That’s my line, Ojou-sama. What are you doing in this desolated place?”

“We’re doing demolitions and rebuilding houses. Even if the top priority is the farm, we cannot neglect the residential area completely, right?”

Izayoi nodded with an “Ah, I see” look.

“But Ojou-sama, aren’t you abusing the giant a little? I mean, you’ve been working Deen day in and day out without rest, right? Since the work at the farms has already come to an end, shouldn’t you at least give it some rest?”

Asuka seemed a little embarrassed[13] as Izayoi made the dig at her with his words.

“That…Forget it, you’re right. Fine, we’ll call it a day.”

“Deen.”

Deen nodded its head that housed only one eye and stretched out it’s gigantic hand towards Asuka. With an elegant movement, Asuka gracefully lifted her dress a little as she bent to seat herself on the hand and was brought to rest upon Deen’s shoulders.

Seeing that, Izayoi leapt to stand upon the other shoulder of Deen.

“Sorry for the rudeness.”

“If you’re sorry, then jump off.”

“Well, then I’m not sorry.”

“Then have it your way……But come to talk about it, have you gotten yourself a nice reward?”

“Hm, you can count it as catching up after some struggle.”

Following the tremble and swaying that was Deen’s heavy steps, the two were having a cordial conversation.

Shortly after, a gust of strong wind blew from above and at the same time, Kasukabe Yō’s voice could be heard.

“Were you two on the way back?”

“Mhn. Kasukabe too?”

“Mhn. Me too…..Deen, can I sit on top of its head?”

“Sure, no problem.”

“Oi oi, that’s not fair, Ojou-sama.”

Izayoi protested as Asuka purposefully turned her head away with a smug look.

Spreading her arms and legs wide like a [大] character, Yō got herself close to Deen’s head before making her landing and when she did, she gave a sigh.

“Izayoi, did you get any achievements?”

“Oh yeah, it’s fantastic. Better stay tuned. Ahahahhahha!”

Izayoi hugged his chest as he gave a loud laugh.

“Is that so….” Yō seemed more sullen than usual as she lay down upon Deen’s head. Izayoi and Asuka also noted that something was amiss but they dismissed it as fatigue from a hard day’s work and hence decided to let her rest quietly.

Deen eventually walked to the reservoir. Although there were other ways to reach the main block, but Deen would’ve destroyed a good chunk of the road and buildings so this was the only road wide enough for him. The trio originally wanted to make a beeline to the main building but a shout from the lane leading off to the farm lands halted them in their tracks.

There, the apron wearing fox girl, Lily appeared.

“Ahh, goshujin-samas[14] welcome back!”

“We’re back, Lily, is the farm doing well?”

“Yes, other than planting and sowing, the rest are all completed. I’ve just gone to confirm the water canal that leads the water from the reservoir to the farm regions and was planning to do up some adjustments before the fields are complete.”

Looking closely, Lily’s hands were covered with mud.

Perhaps it was due to the fact that the she had worked through the hot afternoon sun in the fields, her perspiration on her forehead was reflecting the light of the setting sun. And though she might have worked in the hot weather, Lily continued to have that usual energetic smile with her two tails, which were half her height, wagging without a sign of weariness.

“You look happy.”

“Correct! To be able to contribute to the Community with this sort of work is my greatest joy! For lunch would taste much better!”

Lily smiled as she picked up her kitsunemimi. Glancing over at the cluster of trees that was the route to the fields, she clenched her muddy hands before turning back to look at Izayoi and the rest.

“Besides, my family has always been in-charge of overseeing the farmland of our community. In the past when I used to see the barren and wasted land……I was always in a state of despair, for I had thought that my generation wouldn’t be able to get the chance of looking after the fields anymore.”

Lily clenched her muddy fist cutely again. Being more serious in her work than the others, Lily seemed to live an enriched life every day.

At this moment...

Guuuuu~~~~!

Four stomachs began to grumble and the four of them (especially Asuka and Lily) were red in the face.

“……Uhhh…that…”

“…..Asuka. It’s rude.”

“..Wha-wait a minute, Kasukabe?”

“Really now. That’s why I said that you were an Ojou-sama who had lived a comfortable life……”

Tch! Asuka shot a sharp glance at Izayoi. “Normally, isn’t this the time for men to be in the spotlight?”---Although under such a poisonous stare and chiding, Izayoi just ignored both the comment and the stare.

A panicking Lily then recalled about having mentioned the word lunch as she said.

“W-Well, we are preparing lunch over at the main block now. Although we are only making some simple onigiri, if you are willing to wait a little while longer, we can get more varieties prepared. Are there any special orders……?”

“Really? Then Umehachin[15] and Soy sauce.”

“I’ll just have mine with Kombu[16].”

“Hmmm….Sea chicken mayonnaise.[17]”

“Eh?” Asuka and Lily became confused. Yō wanted to explain but she does not know how to do it.

Izayoi, trying his best to hold back his laughter, leapt down to Lily’s side and carried her up.

“I-Izayoi-sama! Wha-what are…”

“Lily, you’d better sit up here, If you aren’t faster, Ojou-sama’s tummy will be making noises again.”

“Ara, who said that you can sit?”

“Heh? I can’t?”

“Didn’t you say before? If you’re rude, please leave. So only Lily is invited to come up here and we’ll let the ruffian walk on his own.”

Hmph. Asuka turned her head away. Izayoi smiled wryly as he placed Lily on Deen’s hand and walked by himself.

By the time the group made their way to the end of the road that led from the main block to the reservoir, it was already one pm in the afternoon.

Part 2

After finishing their meals, Lily stayed behind to clear the tables while the problem children went to the great hall. To decide on the number of days they would get to participate in the festival, Izayoi, Asuka and Yō would have to present their Game results respectively to Jin and Leticia who would be in-charge of the judging.

“Hey, where’s Kuro Usagi?”

“She just headed off to the store of [Thousand Eyes] a while ago.”

“Since we’ve known the basics, Leticia and I will suffice. Anyway, it’s only Izayoi-san’s report that we have not heard of yet.”

“I see.” Izayoi nodded his head.

“Ahem”. Jin then faked a cough and began to announce in sequence:

“Putting small victories aside, let us start with the bigger ones. Starting with Asuka, she’s managed to change and convert the ground to make it more suitable for agricultural purposes and also managed to win 10 goats. It’s promised that once the stables and land are prepared for them, the goats can then be led over to our lands.”

“Fufu. The kids were all saying “The goats are coming”, “We can have milk now” or “We can finally make cheese!” and were all excited. Although it isn’t flashy or amazing, but in terms of the economical aspect, I must say that it’s a great achievement. ”

Asuka flings her hair. Although it’s true that this wasn’t some flashy or fantastic achievement, it’s crucial to have livestock to sustain a well-balanced lifestyle, so in that sense, one can say that it is a good achievement. Leticia then took the report and continued.

“Now it’s Yō’s achievement…Oh, this is a pretty amazing one. It’s from the same [Will-O'-Wisp] group that we met during the celebration for the Birth of the Fire Dragon. It seems that Yō had a re-match with them.”

Izayoi noticed and moved his eyebrow a little. It looks like it’s one of the three invitation letters that they mentioned before.

---[Will-O'-Wisp] is a Northern Community.

The spirit that holds the Blazing Purgatory Flames; Jack-O'-Lantern.

The Gnome who wears a Gothic Lolita outfit, Ayesha Ignis Fatuus.

They are members of the community [Will-O'-Wisp] and the community is known for glassblowing and candle making.

“Yō-ojousama had won a game by [Will-O'-Wisp] and acquired a free order from Jack’s very own hands, a giant candle holder that can store fire.”

“If you place it in one of the underground workrooms and set up the ritual, it’ll light up all the other products made by [Will-O'-Wisp]. And in addition, we can use the opportunity to let [Will-O'-Wisp] to custom make various candlestick racks, lamps and other daily necessities. Although they are quite costly…… but after some deliberation, we felt that it wasn’t a bad investment. That way, the Community will always have an inextinguishable supply of heat and fire.”

“……Oh? That’s really impressive.”

Izayoi’s tone carried joy and admiration. In his eyes, this was really a great achievement. Since the kitchen currently used an old-style firewood Oven, this would save considerable time for cooking. And since candles will no longer be exhausted, reading books in the main library would be much easier as well. For a bookworm like Izayoi, this was fantastic.

“To strengthen our domestic area when I was unaware. Well played, Kasukabe.”

“Un. This time, I did my best.”

Yō gave a rarely seen smug smile. Come to think about it, regarding this Competition between the problem children, she did show an unusual amount of fighting spirit and must have carried a sort of determination to take part in the competition. So much so that it wouldn’t be surprising if that confident smile of hers was a way of hers to express the thoughts of :[There shouldn’t be anyone achieving a better achievement than this].

Izayoi leaned back on the spine of the chair while taking a look at all the faces in the room before smiling roguishly.

“Oh my~ You two sure are something. To be able to win such great achievements in small-level games that usually involves gambling for 7-digit communities sure are something.”

“Thanks for the high compliments…..so, what did Izayoi-kun achieve?”

Asuka glanced Izayoi sharply.

Izayoi only put on a fearless grin and urged everyone to stand up from their seats.

“Well then, let’s all go and collect the reward.”

“….Collect the reward? Where?”

“To the shop of [Thousand Eyes]. Since Kuro Usagi is already there, it’s just as well. For I wanted to let all the key members hear of those stuff too.”

Due to Izayoi’s vague response, the others felt more confused. Nevertheless, the group left the conference hall and went to Thousand Eyes.

Part 3

Through Fountain Square and over the bridge to cross the city's waterways, the group made their way towards Thousand Eyes. The peach colored petals had scattered on the floor as the trees were beginning to grow small green buds. When they first came to the City of Little Garden, Asuka had once said that these trees looked very similar to Sakura blossoms but after 2 months, the flower petals seemed to have finally wilted. Although there was an urge for them to stop and enjoy the sight of those pink petals scattering in the winds, the group decided to resist the temptation for going to Thousand Eyes was the main priority.

As they neared the shop, the shop assistant was seen using her bamboo broom to sweep away the flower petals from the shop entrance. Originally busy with her task, she had quickly taken on a nasty look on her face when she saw Izayoi and the rest.

"….You people again."

"Speaking of which, aren't you always sweeping the floor? You never get tired of it don't you?"

"Hmph. Only people who are spoilt will say things like [I'm tired of these tasks]. Moreover, though I may be a new member, I'm still responsible for looking after this 2105380 Outer Gate's branch shop. I'm only doing a strict choosing of my customers while baring those that may try to enter by force for only the rich hold the privilege to enter this shop! It's not like I'm always sweeping leaves every day!"

"Hai~~? I see. What an impressive job, you've got my admiration. Amazing, well, excuse our intrusion."

"GET OUT!"

Izayoi tried to ignore the shop assistant as per usual and barge in, but with her baring her fangs and waving wildly with her bamboo broom, Izayoi could only grab the tip of the broom while drooping his shoulders in impatience. Even though Shiroyasha should've told her about Izayoi and the rest, but apparently, the shop assistant was a stubborn person. It might be interesting to barge in by force and make her cry, right? Izayoi was hatching that sort of devilish idea

in his head. But before there was a chance to make this into a ruckus. Shiroyasha's voice was heard.

"Ah Ah, sorry, sorry, I forgot to inform you about the little ones' coming over. Due to something important just now...Quick let them in now."

Shiroyasha's voice was heard but she did not appear before them and despite the hatred that she might harbor against Izayoi and the rest with all of her heart, the shop assistant was not to defy an order from her master.

Giving a sigh and moving aside,

"……Please go in. Welcome."

Parting the curtains in the doorway, Izayoi and the others who entered the shop of [Thousand Eyes] at her invitation.

The group, following the usual route, made their way through the courtyard to the Shiroyasha's very own exclusive room.

"S-S-S Stop it Shiroyasha-sama!! Hasn't Kuro Usagi said that she's an aristocrat of Little Garden?! In regards to the upkeep of appearances, Kuro Usagi will not agree to wear these sort of clothes!!!!"

"J-Just as Kuro Usagi said! I'm a goddess as pure as the white snow, …I …I will not agree to appear before others in that sort of disgraceful appearance too …!"

From Kuro Usagi and Shirayuki-hime's pitiful shouts, the gang were at a loss of words.

Nevertheless, Shiroyasha's shadow was shown closing in to the two behind the shōji.[18]

"Guhuhuu…how pure and innocent maidens you are. But because you two are so pure and innocent, it makes me want to corrupt you two even more, especially for being high class flowers! Along with those delicious and ripe, plump bodies, everyone would want to do some****** which will cause ***** things to do *****and cause us to make such clothes so you can do various ****** moves. That's right! Just like what I'm doing now!"

"SHUT UP YOU PERVERTED GOD!"

“SHUT UP YOU PERVERTED GOD!”

At that moment, a strong flood of water and a flash of Lightning pierced the shoji doors.

Shiroyasha then flew out and did a complete three and a half rounds as she flew towards Izayoi due to the attack, before getting caught with Izayoi’s foot as usual.

“Tei”

“Goba! I…I say that you are still missing the mark by a bit! For didn’t I tell you before not to use your foot to catch me?!”

“Then don’t fly. Well, since Kuro Usagi used her Vajra, what did you do to make her-”

So angry…---That sentence wasn’t allowed to be completed.

For Izayoi was stumped by the sight of Kuro Usagi and the other when the mist of the evaporated water started to clear.

“Kuro Usagi? What’s with the getup?”

AUuu! From the mist, there comes a weak moan.

“T-Troublesome…why are Izayoi and the rest here?”

“No, I think that’s my line….sigh.”

Izayoi waved his hands around to clear the mist.

At the same time, Kuro Usagi and Shirayuki-hime were hugging their own bodies while squatting in embarrassment.

As the mist dissipated and cleared their field of vision, everyone behind had also seen Kuro Usagi and Shirayuki’s appearance.

The problem children were speechless at the two for a while before Asuka broke the ice with her question.

“……Kimono?”

“That…umm..a super-short kimono?”

“No, it’s a one-inch super-short mini-skirt Kimono with garter-belt.”

Shiroyasha said while puffing up her tiny chest smugly.

Kuro Usagi and Shirayuki-hime had been forced into a very tight kimono that clearly highlighted their voluptuous bodies while the modified kimono was truncated from the thighs onwards. And from the shoulder to the cleavage, there was a wide open area to show them in their full glory along with laced black stockings and garter belts, what a magnificent sight. To see two well-endowed beauties in such little clothing would make virtually anyone happy. Though it may not be their intentions, they would still be the centre of attraction of everyone's gaze.

And the fact was that those laced stockings made the overall sense of their dress seem a little off.

"Haa" Leticia breathed a sigh of relief while walking towards Kuro Usagi.

"You two better go have a change of clothes. Especially Kuro Usagi. You're dripping wet."

"Whaaaat?! Kuro Usagi's body is drenched?!"

Voom!~~Shiroyasha immediately zoomed towards there.

---*Kaboom!* An intensified voltage struck Shiroyasha!

Part 4

“Well well, the design was pretty good, but next time, Shiroyasha, you got to count me in as well in designing the clothing……”

“This will keep going on forever if you continue this topic.”

Pak! Kuro Usagi who’d finished changing her clothes lightly hits Izayoi’s head.

But Shiroyasha shook her head that was slightly burnt as she answered seriously.

“Nah, the dress does have some form of connection to today’s topic. That outfit wasn’t really intended for Kuro Usagi to wear but it’s being manufactured elsewhere and is intended for the staff of the new facilities.”

“Ne……new facilities?! Making that kind of ecchi kimonos?! What kind of an idiot is making these designs!?!?!”

“Relax already, I’ve said it’s a legitimate facility. Anyways, I might as well explain, although the topic had been side tracked a little, but concerning my intention for today, it’s actually about the things that I intend to do as [Floor Master]. I intend to develop the lower parts of the East Side since we have been left alone by the Demon Lords for some time and there has yet to be a Demon Lord to appear that can be called a Demon Lord in the first place. But just when I was wracking my brains over which place to start from, Izayoi came up and proposed a solution. “To develop a place, you must ensure a good water supply.”

“Hm, wasn’t it not too long ago that a drought had plagued the lands? From that, I had surmised that having a constant and fresh supply of water would be the top priority for any community.”

“Although there are plenty of waterways here, but these waterways are only for communities of upper levels. 7 digit communities are always getting water from outside the city. Although there are periodic rainfalls, there are only a handful of communities who are able to collect sufficient water supplies…”

Seeing how Izayoi and Shiroyasha were speaking in such a shockingly serious tone, Kuro Usagi was feeling a little bewildered,

but she nodded in agreement:

“Well, yeah, we aren’t like the North which has plenty of snow nor like the South where there’s a river that flows directly from the city. Regarding that problem, it can only be said as a unique characteristic of the region’s climate and accept it as part of life.”

“Unhm. And that’s why I thought of using the authority as [Floor Master] to develop a large scale waterway construction. Having that in mind, I had tasked Izayoi to obtain a Gift from Shirayuki for the water source ….what I didn’t expect was for him to actually make her his subordinate by contract….Shirayuki, I’m afraid that you need to practice more?”

Shiroyasha smiled mischievously at Shirayuki-hime.

Shirayuki who had finished returning to her own white kimono, turned her head away unhappily.

“I understand what had transpired between you guys already. But if it were so, you could have just told me directly……there wasn’t a need to get the message to me through this brat. All you had to do was to tell me and I’d gladly help.”

Shirayuki-hime grumbled.

However, Shiroyasha began to speak in a serious tone to retort to her complaint.

“No, there won’t be any point in it if that’s the case. If the [Floor Master] were to be responsible for the whole process and get it completed, it would be an act of excessive doting and would lead to the downward spiral of the lower level’s standards. Even if I prepared the facilities, but the final placing of the keystone[19] should still be done by the hand of a resident that would benefit in the region. This time, there’s also another reason behind asking Izayoi to carry out the proposed plan. It is a ploy to announce that there’s a Community with a significant strength appearing in the lowest levels and to use it to heighten the competitive spirit amongst the others.”

Well, since even a flag-less community like the No Names were able to do it, some communities are bound to get cocky with the thoughts of [Maybe I can do it too!] and start to work towards that goal.

Hearing the full details of Shiroyasha's plan, a Shirayuki-hime with a sullen face gave a sidelong look at Izayoi before giving in with a sigh

"Uuuuu….. whatever. There isn't any way to change the contract details of the game even If I object it. Fine, I'll entrust Tritonis Falls and my community of naiads to the boy then."

"Thanks. Well, you needn't worry for I won't be giving you any orders for some time. After all, it is in the contract that I will have to loan you to Shiroyasha until the constructions are completed--- Now then…"

Once the conversations between Izayoi and Shirayuki-hime on the subject on the facilities were done, Izayoi looked to Shiroyasha.

He did not plan on loaning Shirayuki-hime for free.

It was because of the Game that Shiroyasha had proposed that he had taken up that he gladly loaned out Shirayuki-hime to clear the game that was: [To obtain the Gift that can be used as a Water Source].

A haughty glint could be seen in Izayoi's eye as he reached out an arm to ask for his compensation.

"Well, now that the conditions are met, the game should also be cleared. I guess it's time to give me what was agreed upon."

"Fufu, of course. [No Name]'s entrustments are not unheard of…… But for the development of the Region, for you to be so much as willing to loan a person who holds [Divinity], it would be seen as having had a great achievement and there should be no other Communities that would want to complain would they?"

Hearing their conversation up to this point, the rest of the [No Name]'s tensed up in anticipation. After all, the winner gets to fully participate in the Harvest festival and it all came down to this reward that he was about to receive.

Shiroyasha then stretched her arms and clapped.

Then, the room was immediately filled with a glow and a goatskin parchment appeared as the light started to fade.

Plucking a quill out of thin air, Shiroyasha gave the end of the

parchment her signature before turning to look at Jin who was the Community's leader.

"Well then, Jin Russel, this will be left in your care."

"Eh? M-Me?"

"Yeah, this is something only community leaders must do and manage, so it should be accepted by you."

Jin sat down in seiza and scanned though the contents of the goatskin parchment.

Following that, he was soon frozen solid by the sheer impact of its contents.

"This…This is….don't tell me… it is?!"

"What's the matter, Jin bocchan?"

Doing Kuro Usagi leapt behind Jin to have a look.

She too, was now motionless from seeing the contents.

The scroll's contents were as follow:

< <2105380 Outer Gate Concession Grant > >

***The Floor Master confirms that this document is a Concessions Grant for an Outer Gate. *With the Concession Grant issued, the Community can customize the appearance of the Outer Gate to promote themselves. *The owner Community of the Concession Grant receives 80% [20] of the payed usage fees of the aforementioned "Astral Gate". *The owner Community of the Concession Grant is allowed to freely use the aforementioned "Astral Gate". *With the Concession Grant, the Community named " " is recognized as a Region Master.**

"Thousand Eyes" Seal

“This…This is…Outer gate……Astral gate’s concession grant…..! We are also the [Region Master]?!”

“Ah, the concession grant have always been given to the most prominent Community in the region and after the disbanding of Fores Garos, it has been under [Thousand Eyes] for safekeeping…. Returning it to the current ‘you’, shouldn’t be a problem, right?”

“Huhuhu” Shiroyasha was laughing.

---The so called Concession Grant to the Astral Gate was a special [Geass Roll] that allowed one to receive the various Authorities and benefits that were associated with the Outer Gates of Little Garden’s Cities. For example, it allowed the activation of the [Astral Gate] to link up with other Outer Gates, or the responsibility of the architecture or redecoration of the Outer Gate as a whole to promote one’s own Community. Hence it was a fact that the Concession grant was a very important Authority for it allowed the Community to affect the revival of the region through the decorations.”[21]

When it came to a competition between similar classed Outer Gates, the appearance of the Outer Gate would also be a determinant for the level of the Regions.

And since the realm of influence was that big, the Community that held this Authority would be called the [Region Master].

“B-but, now we don’t even have a decent flag for our community. Seeing the Outer Gate without an insignia, the other communities will raise some questions…”

“Oi, O-chibi-sama, use your brain for a while. We can simply give a free supply of water to the other communities to shut them up. Even the most cynical of them will keep quiet.”

Jin swallowed his saliva and the words that were about to come out of his mouth. Izayoi had even considered this aspect when he took that course of action.

Jin looked at Kuro Usagi and asked meekly as he drew his breath.

“Kuro Usagi…”

“--……”

Kuro Usagi was just trembling without answering.

While trembling, Kuro Usagi slowly walked towards Izayoi.

“What? If you got anything that you are unsatisfied with, feel free to shoot away.”

“….---”

Dong Kuro Usagi suddenly leapt to Izayoi’s arms.

“AMAZING! AMAZING! AMAZING! YOU’RE FANTASTIC! IZAYOI-SAN! YOU’VE ALLOWED US TO GO THIS FAR IN JUST TWO MONTHS! REALLY, really, really thanks a lot for your efforts!!!!!!”

Woo～Ga～? Kuro Usagi was hugging Izayoi tightly while twirling around and making weird whooping noises.

Izayoi, although he was overwhelmed with the sudden burst of emotions from Kuro Usagi, he quickly calmed down after feeling the soft sensation of Kuro Usagi’s breasts.

“My my, I guess I got extra service then.”

Izayoi then began to enjoy Kuro Usagi’s body. How can such a delicate body have this amazing rustic texture? Although a little surprised, since it felt good, he decided to ignore the extra details since she probably wouldn’t mind even if he sexually harassed her a little.

As for the other two problem children, they exchanged a look of disappointment.

“…As expected. It looks like we've lost.”

“Yep. Sorry about that, Asuka.”

“I don’t mind. Kasukabe-san, do you mind?”

“Nn. After all, there’s no way about it. You can see how Kuro Usagi and Jin….. are that happy.”

“Is that so.”

Asuka then looked at Kuro Usagi and the rest.

Izayoi was laughing at the center of the cheering duo, whereas the two of them were gazing towards his direction seemingly viewing something that was distant.

Chapter 3

Part 1

---That night, the [No Name] held a small party.

The table was laden with lots of special dishes that weren't seen normally and the children of the Senior group had also joined in the ranks of those who toasted[22] their cups, celebrating with joy.

Kuro Usagi prepared the fish that was caught in the river. After lightly grilling it and frying it, she used a sauce to thicken and coat the fish before plating it up. Looks like she's spent quite some time preparing the dish and was quite satisfied with her work as well. Needless to say, everyone from the main players to the children were full of praise about the dish but Izayoi…

"Kuro Usagi. I reckon that if you used a vinegar-based sauce instead of this starchy sauce, the fish will taste better."

---And with that, he effectively killed the mood.

When the party finished, Kasukabe Yō and her Calico cat went to their room to rest.

It was late into the night and Yō sat down beside the window where cool air could be felt brushing in from the outside.

"Hu." Yō sighed as the night breeze bushed pass her cheeks.

"Calico cat, I can only participate after the start of the Harvest Festival now. Though it is a pity, but I won't be able to go for the Eve of the Harvest Festival after all."

"…Is that so. That's really a pity, Oujo."

"Un. But it can't be helped. Izayoi-san really is amazing. He had solved the water shortage and saved Leticia from bondage[23]. Just like the other time, he had also earned my respect from the solving of the previous Demon Lord's riddles and it was that time that I felt that he really is an amazing guy."

That's why—there's no helping it.

Seeming to have convinced herself Yō gave a slight smile as she gazed upon the starry skies.

However, she had immediately averted her gaze to the ground, seeming to have noticed something.

……How ironic. Originally wanting to seek comfort while stargazing……But the brightest one is the full moon on the sixteenth night.[24]

"……However, Izayoi's not the only one who's amazing. Asuka as well, to be able to change a barren and desolated wasteland to fertile ground within a month is truly unbelievable."

"Hmph. That sort of thing isn't much. We had lived in an era where there's nothing remarkable about it."

"That's because of our advanced technology. If we relied upon the strength of Man to turn the land into a farm…it should have taken at least a few generations to achieve that sort of revival."

But Asuka's able to finish the ploughing of the land in a month, it was truly a miracle that could be called a [Gift].

Though Yō was also proud of the outstanding results that her friends had achieved, the smile on her face seemed to be a lonely one.

Noticing it, Calico cat purred.

"Is there something wrong, Oujo?"

"…No, it's nothing."

It's just that——Yō paused for a while before casting her gaze towards the direction of the farmlands.

"…Calico cat, that farm…... Izayoi-san provided the water while Asuka provided the land. So I had thought that if only I could prepare the saplings for the last step……I can lift my head high and say words like "Hooray! We three made the farm together!" or something like that…So for that end, I had worked hard this time to obtain the rights to participate in the Harvest Festival for a few more days. "

But it wasn't enough. Despite having achieved great prizes from the

gift game that she was confident of, defeat was still evident.

The friend, who's the most powerful among them all, even with the initial handicap, had easily achieved a result that far exceeded her own.

And it's not just the first time. Yō wasn't able to get the most important achievements in Gift games. Even in the Gift games by the demon lord previously, it was an unsightly defeat before she could even start fighting.

For the aim of fighting alongside the others that aspired to [Defeat the Demon Lords], Yō had wanted to have more time to interact with the Eudemons that inhabited the South Side to befriend more of them as much as possible.

Normal gift games aside, Yō truly understood it from experience that to challenge a Demon Lord in a game, she was still insufficient in her current state.

"Calico cat."

"Hmm?"

"Izayoi and Asuka. They're both amazing."

"I see."[25]

Calico cat gave a short reply.

Yō then gazed upon the bright Moon on the 16th Night.

"But I ……ain't as strong."

"……"

"Sure enough, carrying half-baked feelings when joining the Community isn't going to work out fine. It's just by chance that I met great friends……yet I am unable to maintain and support this relationship."

"……Oujo……"

Unable to find the right words, Calico cat could only silently nuzzle Yō's hand.

In response to his action, Yō gave Calico cat a light scratch under

the chin before carrying him into her arms and curling into a ball while hugging her knees as well.

Part 2

----It was a while after that when Calico cat snuck out from the bedroom.

The lamp light had already been blown out when Calico cat slowly descended the stairs with the aid of the light from the stars and the moon that shone through the windows.

It was the first time Yō had made any human friends, and Calico cat had been the most relieved to see that. Having been born on the same day as Yō and being together for 14 years……he believed that he did not have much time left in this world. It's not due to any sickness, but due to the fact that his lifespan was burning near its end. Originally, Calico cat had thought that he could live out a peaceful life in Little Garden……but it would seem that he still had a big task to carry out before that.

(You little brat…to make Oujo sad…is unforgivable!)

Tiptoeing while on its cat paws, Calico cat was carefully navigating the way with much caution.

Although cats can silently move through the corridors, but that "brat" was Sakamaki Izayoi. So it's better if he practiced some caution.

Calico cat was taking an unnaturally interesting method for cats to move as he slid down the stairs following the staircase.

Eavesdropping from the conversation of the senior group of children who were responsible for blowing out the candles in the main building, it picked up the information that Izayoi was now in the bath. Usually, he would have been in the library reading books, but it's probably due to the party with Kuro Usagi and the others that the times were delayed.

(Bathing huh? I should probably leave some cat hair in your clothes……but that would be too light a punishment if you want to cleanse your sins…)

Upon reaching the bath region, Calico cat decided to analyze the situation first. Originally, he had thought that it was only Izayoi in this place……however, there were two more baskets of what looked

like clothes that belonged to females in the changing room.

(Ohh…One male actually being with two other females, you sure have it going brat…!)

There also seemed to be a happy conversation traveling from the baths to his ears.

For Calico cat, it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to forgive Izayoi and he angrily jumped to Izayoi's clothes basket to dig and start his search.

Underneath the school uniform, Calico cat was delighted to see the hard object. Seeming to have formulated a plan, his eyes were glinting in the dark.

(That brat's always wearing it on his head… Good. I'll use this.)

Calico cat picked it up with his mouth and made his escape silently.

Part 3

Eayaaa —— Along with this young moan, Izayoi was washing Lily's hair.

Although I had followed Izayoi in with the intention to wash his back, how did it come to this situation where he's helping to wash my hair? Even though Lily held those queries in her head, but seeing how Izayoi seemed to be in such a good mood, she decided to obediently allow him to wash her hair.

After all, nothing was more pleasurable than when being gently scratched and stroked behind the fox ears[26] with those fingertips of his that exerted just the right amount of force to massage.

Lily was full of euphoria and moaned dizzily. Another voice then came from behind.

"Hey, I'm done."

"Ye-Yes. Thank you!"

“That’s nothing. If I only gave Leticia the special treatment (washing) it won’t be fair to you, right?”

Izayoi laughed “Ahaha” as he moved towards the bath [pool].[27]

In the bath [pool], Leticia, who had entered first, smiled wryly at the two. Since she had removed the special ribbon that was made for her, she wasn’t in her usual loli-esque look but was looking like a well-endowed lady.

“Alas, Izayoi-sama, it seems that you can do anything.”

“Don’t say it like I’m only good as a pervert. It’s just that I wanted

to see Leticia's appearance when you let down your hair to enter the bath. After all, Kuro Usagi promised that it is a sight that is [Definitely worth a peek!]."

"Muu……is that so? Fufu, then a penny for your thoughts?"

Leticia rose and sat on the edge of the bath.

Under the light of the stars and moon, her glistening wet golden hair shone with brilliance. Her appearance gave off a completely different feel when compared to that of her appearance under the radiance of the Sun. It was a different style of beauty and it caused Lily who had only come for accompaniment to draw her breath in a trance like state.

"It's really beautiful……"

"Hoho, although it is known that women tend to have a whole new allure when their hair is wet, but for you, Leticia, it seems to be a dramatic change."

"Fu fu. Thank you for the compliment, goshujinsama."

"However, according to the lineage of vampires, they should naturally have an aversion to water. Besides, Leticia, you're a member of the "Draculair Demon Lord" right? Speaking of Dracula the old man, are you the actual one?"

Leticia gave an expression of surprise.

She probably did not anticipate that the discussion would wind up at herself.

---The Count Dracula that Izayoi referred to was about Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia in the 1400s. It's said that he had ordered the many farmers and nobles to be impaled as a punishment and many strange and weird rumors surrounded the noble until it eventually becomes that of the vampire.

While Izayoi was puzzled, Leticia was pouting unhappily.

"No, goshujinsama….that…Although I'm not too sure about the details…but the Count Dracula whom you refer to is a male right? Do I really look like a guy to you?"

"Yes, very much alike. So you better remove the towel for a

thorough examination!”

“……if goshujinsama says so…”

“No…Don’t! Don’t! Stop removing the towel!”

Lily, whose face was beet red stopped Leticia.

Leticia then gave a nonchalant expression as if she had already known this would happen while continuing back to the topic.

“Anyways, how should I put it…….Though it isn’t completely unrelated, but according to the ‘system’[28], he and I are of a different lineage.”

“Is that so?”

“Nn, the reason why I’m called a Draculair is because of the roots in the language. Draculea also has the same meaning as [Child of the Dragon][29] right? I’m a dragon born and we vampires have pure draconic blood flowing in our veins.”

“……Heh?”

Izayoi’s eyes had a sharp glint to it due to his curiosity. It was most probably due to hearing the word “dragon”.

“Pureblood of a dragon type huh…….not bad, I’ve always been interested in the topic of the purebloods of the dragons. For it’s much different from gods and Celestial beings, a completely mysterious race of its own that I can’t quite put a finger on.”

“Really?”

“Really. According to the information that I’ve heard, dragons seem to be a [Eudemon[30] that doesn’t exist on the Phylogenetic Tree], but that in itself is fundamentally a contradiction. Weren’t Eudemons a species that were born when their spirit level were heightened to the point where the Phylogenetic Tree registers a sudden change in something like an ‘explosive’ evolution? If it didn’t evolve from the Phylogenetic tree, won’t it be a case of [Life. Existing. From. Nothingness]?”

“You understand?”

Leticia tilted her head seeming to tell with her body gesture the words “Of course right, do you still need to ask that?”

Izayoi was speechless for a moment.

“----------Oh? Could I ask of you to explain it to me in a different way?”

“As you’ve said……pure blood dragons just [happened] and were not from being [born]. One day, without explanation or precursors to warn, a huge build-up of energy eventually formed them---that is the pureblood of the dragons. In later generations, the dragons of monomer birth are what would be classified as pure dragons and offspring of those that breed with other species are classified as inferior dragons.”

“If it is reproduced via monomer birth, shouldn’t the size be small?”

“No it isn’t. A pure dragon has an unimaginable huge size. Especially the dragon that created the Vampire race, it is so big that it is recorded as [The dragon that carried the world] in legends.”

(Ha?) Izayoi was speechless.

---[The dragon that carried the world], it’s a myth created to explain how Earth came about. There were also similar variations around the world. Sometimes it is considered as the supreme god in various mythologies and religious cosmology. In ancient Egypt, there is the legend that “Earth was a god that was covered by plants while the body of the sky goddess arched over him to hold up the atmospheric layer.”[31]

Just like that, there were many religions that believed the view of cosmos that [The world＝God]. However, according to Leticia’s words, it would mean that those creatures mentioned in the creationism theories do exist in reality.

(No…Since I’m still unable to determine the level of the Vampire Race’s civilization before their arrival in Little Garden, I won’t be able to confirm the existence of dragons. After all these types of creationism theories were all proposed before the era of actual advancement in civilization and cultures… But…)

If a mythological dragon like that existed……

I would want to see one for myself no matter what. Thinking about it Izayoi couldn’t help but feel his blood boil in excitement.

“…Are there no recordings of such a creature?”

“There doesn’t seem to be any detailed documentation of it. We vampires are created from the dragon, a race to prevent the phylogenetic tree from falling into disorder and chaos. Or so it was said by our older generations. By sucking blood, we are able to evolve to adapt to different species, hence, we are called the guardians of the phylogenetic tree. That’s all I know.” Leticia said.

Oh~……Izayoi sighed in plaint and surprise when he heard that.

Thinking about it carefully, this was not an impossible matter. Since a world as crazy as Little Garden existed, it shouldn’t be surprising if there were other extraordinarily unbelievable things that were around as well.

Although he still has a mountain of questions…Izayoi decided to find the answers to those by himself.

“……Hmm? So as to say, ghosts are closer to Eudemons?”

“Not exactly. Ghosts are mostly of a separate entity unrelated to the others, varying to the body type for there are those that are purely ethereal in form and those that are of the beast types in the Phylogenetic Tree. As for us vampires, we are about half of each type.”

“Is that so.” Izayoi responded.

“Are there any more questions? If not, I do believe that it is my time to ask.”

“Eh?”

“Izayoi-kun, how was your life in your world?”

This time, Izayoi was the one with the surprised expression.

Leticia was slowly edging over to Izayoi while revealing a rare, gentle smile to plead him to tell.

“I was curious when you mentioned it before. Although I am interested in Yō and Asuka’s lives as well, I am a little more interested in Izayoi-kun’s. Not only having a powerful gift as well as being knowledgeable in the affairs of Little Garden. Were you researching into this realm of knowledge in your previous world?”

“Nope. I just studied them out of curiosity. In fact, there isn’t

anything particular that I had wanted to do."

"Really? You did some self-study for no reason?"

"Eh…Ah…Not really…"

Actually, it wasn't alone…… thinking about it caused Izayoi to have a bitter smile.

Leticia probably noticed the subtle and minute changes in the facial expressions and decided to press further:

"You're not studying all of these alone right? There should be study mates right?"

"How can that be possible? If I had a friend like that, I wouldn't be coming to Little Garden to kill time right? Hahahahaha!"

Izayoi laughed as he got up from the bath. Although it wasn't as if he hated people being inquisitive or getting investigated, but because he simply did not enjoy being asked in that way.

Sensing the other two following behind him, Izayoi went on to his basket to retrieve his clothes.

In the next moment, Izayoi would find that his headphones had disappeared.

Part 4

---The next morning, all the way until the very moment before the departure time, Izayoi never appeared at the meeting place.

Asuka who obtained the rights to participate from day one had an umbrella in her hand with her baggage packed for a long journey placed beside her. That scarlet formal dress of hers was just as eye-catching as ever and only highlighted her elegant stance even further.

Adjusting her grip on the umbrella, Asuka touched her hand to her cheek with a hint of worry in her voice:

“Izayoi-kun is still searching for it? Didn’t we turn the place over already last night and came up with nothing?”

“YES! Everyone, even the children have been enlisted to search for it…Uuu we’ll be late if we don’t set off soon…”

Kuro Usagi was wearing her usual outfit with garter belts and thigh high socks while waiting worriedly for Izayoi and Jin beside her was feeling the same.

“Ah! He’s here!”

Jin shouted out, but Izayoi was not wearing his headphones. But he was wearing a hairband in place of it.

Kuro Usagi widened her eyes and asked.

“Are…you alright?”

“If I didn’t place anything on my head, my hair would stick out horribly but that aside, I’ve something important to say.”

Izayoi moved aside. Behind him, Yō and Calico cat were there with a luggage pulled up beside them.

“……Are you sure?”

“No choice. Without that thing on my head, my hair will not be obedient and that leaves me with no choice but to stay. Although my headphones were just some old spoilt junk, but it bothers me to

be unable to find it.”

Izayoi threw back his head while laughing cheerfully. As for the other members of No Names, they looked at each other. In other words, Izayoi would rather stay back to look for his headphones than go to Underwood.

Yō who had a blank expression blinked her eyes as she lifted her head to look at Izayoi—and it was not long after that she had suddenly revealed a happy and beautiful smile akin to a flower blooming while expressing her gratitude to him.

“Thank you. I will work hard in your place.”

“Ah, I’ll leave it to you. So you better keep your promise and make at least a 100 friends okay? After all, the South has lots of Eudemons and I was looking forward to the trip ya know?”

“Un. I know.”

Yō waved her hand energetically in farewell to Izayoi before gathering Calico cat into her arm as she ran towards Asuka and the others.

Just like that, Kasukabe Yō, Kudou Asuka, Kuro Usagi, Jin Russel and Calico cat all went ahead to Underwood.

Leticia and Izayoi waved goodbyes to them while seeing them off. When the gang was out of sight, Leticia looked at Izayoi worriedly.

“Izayoi-sama……are you sure about it? You’ve given us the concession grant and had won the priority. You deserved this reward the most. If it’s about the headphones, we can-”

“You won’t find it. The perpetrator definitely must’ve hidden it somewhere that only the culprit can find it.”

Leticia’s face became tauter.

Even though she did not say it, but she should have had the same hunch as Izayoi as well.

Izayoi then shrugged his shoulders and smiled wryly.

“At that time, I was having a bath, so the headphones cannot magically grow a pair of legs to run off. Is it not? Or maybe I was struck by a binbogami[32]? In that case it would make a unique

looking collection."

"Then…who is it??"

"Well, using the process of elimination, Yō would be the most suspicious…… However, Yō isn't the sort of person to do these things. Seeing it in another light, it should be those who were close to her."

"Then who is it?"

Leticia continued to press the matter but Izayoi just waved his hand away.

"Forget it, forget it. It'll probably show up within a few days. Besides, it's just headphones made by some layman, so they're pretty much worthless anyways."

"…Made. By. Some. Layman? Could it be that it was made by someone you know?"

Uu Izayoi frowned. And they were both reminded about their conversation in the bath yesterday.

Although Izayoi wanted to change the topic for he felt it too troublesome to talk about…But thinking about it, there really wasn't anything to hide and hence, Izayoi decided to push away that thought.

"……Want to hear about my home world?"

"Yes. Most definitely."

"Well, please make some breakfast then, I'm famished. As for tea, please make some nicely brewed green tea and Japanese sweets as well. For that will be the cost for the conversation."[33]

Izayoi laughed loudly as Leticia lifted up the hems of her skirt before saying with a smile:

"Yes, my master[34], today's breakfast shall be prepared by thee with the utmost skills for thou delight."

Saying that, she playfully gave a curtsey with a dramatic intent. Perhaps Izayoi felt that a Leticia who was using such a practiced movement for her joke to be amusing, he was laughing heartily while walking towards the dining hall.

Part 5

--- Outer Gate Number 2105380, before the Fountain Square.

The [Astral Gate] has always been activated at fixed timings, other than emergencies, unauthorized individuals cannot use it. Hence when it comes to the activation timing, people would gather in front of the Gate, especially those Communities that require it's function to carry out their commerce. Though for Communities of the lower levels, the toll of a gold coin issued from the minted currency by [Thousand Eyes] was quite a sum, it did nothing to dampen the demand for it would always be a Transportation type Gift that was indispensable to the cities of Little Garden.

Soon, the figures of those who might be waiting for its activation had started to appear around the portal in groups of twos and threes.

Asuka looked at the tiger statue carved upon the portal's post and sighed.

"The first task I have to do when I'm back from the Harvest Festival is to destroy this statue."

"Well……there's no need to rush it, we can wait for the Community's savings to be stabilized before…"

"Ara ara, no won't do, Kuro Usagi. This gate is of great importance to Jin-kun. Let's just see it as an early investment and start with the sculpting of a full body statue and portrait of him……"

"Please don't!"

Jin was now pale. No matter what, that would be too embarrassing for him.

"Well…then I guess we'll use Kuro Usagi for mass advertising."

"WHY MUST YOU USE KURO USAGI FOR ADVERTISING?!"

Pak! Kuro Usagi slapped Asuka's head with a paper fan as the latter pouted.

Yō tilted her head and said.

“Hm……Then we’ll just advertise Kuro Usagi.”

“THAT’S THE SAME THING! AND WHY IS IT ALWAYS ADVERTISING KURO USAGI?!”

Pak! Pak! Kuro Usagi was furiously swinging her paper fan on the problem children.

Even without Izayoi, these two were still problem children. Seeing how those two would always be in synch with each other about that line of thought, Kuro Usagi could only sigh as she took out the two invitation letters.

“We are going to the Southern area of Outer Gate 7759175 of Draco Greif who’s currently hosting the Harvest Festival. However, besides the [Draco Greif]’s invitation, the main host of the stage--- who are the faeries and spirits that reside in the Great Sacred Woods of [Underwood], have also extended their invitation to us. So we will be going to visit these two Communities during the Eve of the Harvest Festival and may you two please take note of this.”

“Un.”

“I see.”

After Kuro Usagi’s words, the Astral Gate started to move into its activation sequence.

Bluish lights begin to glow from the gate and those that were originally milling around in wait for the Astral Gate’s activation began to form a queue. As for Kuro Usagi and the others, they being of the position of [Region Master] stood apart from the waiting queue as they awaited the completion of the activation sequence.

“Everyone, remember to hold on to the Outer Gate Number plate when you enter later.”

“No problem.”

Asuka showed Kuro Usagi the grey metal number plate for confirmation. The numbers written upon the number plate would act as the connector linking up the way to the destination’s [Astral Gate].

Yō too, stretched her hand and showed her number plate. But she was casting her gaze towards the Community Grounds where Izayoi

and the rest were.

“……”

“What’s the problem, Kasukabe-san? Did you forget something?”

“Not really…I was just thinking about Izayoi-kun.”

Did he find his headphones already? Yō slightly tilted her head as she wondered.

Asuka and Kuro Usagi were also concerned and they too, looked towards the direction where their Community Grounds lay.[35]

“Yeah…I wouldn’t have thought that Izayoi-kun would forfeit his right to the spot for his headphones.”

“YES. He was looking forward to this too…”

“The headphones must have been very important to Izayoi-kun.”

The self-proclaimed “hedonistic teenager”, Izayoi would be willing to give up his spot for “fun” and stay in the mansion to search for his headphones.

The headphones must have been extra special with some significant meaning attached to it to have been burdened with such deep feelings to the receiver.

“…Hope he finds them.”

Asuka and Kuro Usagi had also nodded their heads in agreement. After that, the activation sequence of the [Astral Gate] had finally been completed and was ready to be used.

Chapter 4

Part 1

After finishing up his breakfast, Izayoi decided to visit the farms since the kid from the Senior Group whom he sent on an errand to buy some snacks had yet to return. Along the way, he had to cross the water canals, which had their flows provided by the Water Tree, and pass through the tangle of trees and weeds that were at the back area.

Only when he had freed himself from the tangle of trees and weeds, he could finally see the horizon expand before his eyes and the sight of the crisp dried tea-colored fertile lands lay before him. When comparing the sight to that of the gritty arid lands that were the original appearance of this piece of land just a month ago, this was a change that far exceeded his imagination and Izayoi couldn't help but remark in surprise:

"Oh……What a surprise. They managed to cultivate the soil to be suitable for farming already."

Standing at the same spot, Izayoi bent his knees and squatted down to use his palm to press and touch the soft topsoil.

The topsoil that was saturated with moisture and minerals was easily dug up with his hands. The weight of the dense loamy soil could be felt when he held up a handful within his palm. The lands had already been remade into an ideal environment for farming.

Especially the minerals that were found in the topsoil, unless many different types of biological matter and the environmental factors were gathered and in synch, it wouldn't have been possible to recover. For the completely arid wasteland to recover to this level, it must have been quite a lot of hard work.

Just when Izayoi was about to take a look around in the mood to take a stroll, Lily's voice came from the tangle of trees and weeds behind him.

"Ah, Izayoi-sama! Have you come to take a look around the farms?!"

"Nn, though I've already heard of it previously, you guys have sure cultivated quite a remarkable topsoil."

“Yes! It’s all ready and waiting for the seeds or saplings to arrive!”

Lily perked up her fox ears as she replied happily.

At that moment, a gust of wind just happened to blow from the direction of the fertile topsoil, brushing pass their cheeks before passing them by to blow into the tangle of trees and weeds.

The wind wasn’t that kind of arid air like before but with a whiff that was unique to farmlands and the moist wet smell of the topsoil stimulated their nostrils. That, was the true smell of the earth.

Lily took in a deep breath to fill her chest with the air that blew from the farm, before exhaling warmly.

“The wind……has the taste of water.”

“Nn.”

“And also the taste of topsoil.”

“Yep.”

“Has the taste of soil that is alive!”

Lily’s voice showed that she was really moved. Though she had already expressed her gratitude to Izayoi as many times as there were stars in the sky, but within her heart, she should be overflowing with the feeling that there wasn’t enough gratitude that could be expressed completely by her repeated words.

Izayoi glanced at the topsoil and a teasing smile seemed to play at his lips.

“After coming here to have a look at it once more, I realized that this place sure is spacious and wide. Just depending on you, little young urns, do you have a plan on how to take care of such a great piece of land?”

“There’s no need to worry yourself about that, my master.”

At this moment, Leticia had also appeared from the tangle of trees and weeds with a basket that was also filled with tea leaves and tea-time snacks. The child of the Senior group must have returned from her errand and she must have come looking for Izayoi.

“I did hear that Lily was born in a family that’s good at caring for

the farms, but what did you mean by that?" Izayoi tilted his head as he questioned the meaning behind the reply.

"That's right. Actually, Lily here is from the famous lineage that is similar to Inari-kami in terms of their powers and is also the only descendent of their family that has always been in charge of the Community's farms." Leticia patted Lily's back.

Blushing furiously to her ears, Lily had bent her head down.

Izayoi couldn't help but blink his eyes repeatedly at the surprising reply.

"The Inari-kami……is referring to Inari Okami?"

"Nn……That……Though similar, I guess it's not really the same. According to the legend I heard from my Oka-sama, my ancestors were of the line of Shiro Kitsune[36] that has been gifted with Divinity by the Imperial soul of the Uka god [Ukanomitama][37] ……"

Izayoi's eyes widened further in surprise.

---The so-called Uka god with an Imperial soul was often seen as the god of grains, the god of commerce, the god of business venture etc. It was a God that was revered by a lot of people of different realms of profession. 'Uka' has the same meaning as 'grain'. It was assumed that the devotees of the farming god had slowly progressed into the different realms that helped in the propagation of the devotees, hence Ukanomitama had grown to become a god that received devotees from the many realms of profession. And Lily's ancestor was said to be one of the people who are Heralds of the Uka god.

Even though for Izayoi who was born in the twenty-first century, Ukanomitama had also become a god of commerce or a land Lord[38] of such due to industrialization and the expansion of job scopes, gaining devotees from various regions. Even in the regions within the Capital City, it is not uncommon to see altars for worshipping foxes as the devotees see them as the messengers of Ukanomitama.

Izayoi used his hand to rub his chin and showed a smile that seemed to have a hidden significance behind it

"Talking about Ukanomitama, it is a main god who overlooks the Fushimi Inari Taisha main ritual. Since Lily's ancestor had obtained

Divinity from there, then she would at least be a female officer of the Fox god……Isn't that quite a big deal? Was your ancestor originally part of the [No Name] Community as well?"

"Ye…Yes. But at that time, my ancestor was already quite old and hence it was us, the descendants, who inherited the farm. For eight generations after, there wasn't any who could inherit the Divinity. Then my Oka-sama came along as the ninth generation and inherited the Divinity until now."

"Oh……Lily's mother?"

Izayoi scanned the perimeter of the farm once more. Looking at the fertile coffee-colored topsoil, he tilted his head as he asked:

"Then, where's she? Was she taken by the Demon Lord as well?"

"……Yes."

Lily's head drooped down and her fox ears were also pressed on her head. Since it's a person who had enough talent to receive Divinity, the Demon Lord would not have passed up on that chance. After all, Leticia who similarly had Divinity was captured, then this result was to be expected.

Izayoi turned his questioning gaze towards Leticia, seeming to want to know more about Lily's mother but she shook her head.

"We were locked into separate cells. We didn't have a chance to get in touch with the others to find any of their whereabouts. Even though I had obtained my freedom through some negotiations, the current situation is that we still do not know who the main mastermind Demon Lord is."

Leticia also dipped her head as she sank into her gloomy state. She would also be thirsting to know the whereabouts of her comrades, but it was said that even the [Floor Master] Shiroyasha was unable to guess the real identity of the Demon Lord enemy. Then, for the [No Name] who were trying to investigate their opponent by themselves, it would be much more difficult than trying to catch a cloud in the sky.

Noticing the gloomy atmosphere and not wanting them to worry, Lily immediately said:

"Bu….But, even if my Oka-sama isn't around, it will be no problem!

The way to look after the farm is recorded in the books and the tools that are required are here as well! So it will be no problem even if it's left to us!"

"Mhm!" Lily clenched her fists tightly as she raised her hands to her chest.

However, Izayoi continued to fold his arms across his chest, seeming not to have heard her words.

He was silent for a while before adding a few degrees of seriousness to his expression as he asked:

"……Your lineage is of a Herald of Ukanomitama right? Would there be a similar Community within Little Garden that is connected to the same shrine?"

"Eh……Nn. Yes, I think there is. Though it isn't leading to the main shrine, but Kuro Usagi-oneesan has said before that there's a spiritual mountain that stands in the South Side five digit region that leads to the Heavenly gates……"

"Then if we climb that spiritual mountain and directly ask Ukanomitama for the whereabouts, wouldn't it be problem solved? Since it is the main god who gifted the Divinity, I guess that knowing the location of the Herald[39] should also be possible. And if everything goes well, we can also find out the location of that Demon Lord and their real identity……Hohoho. Though this really is a self-praise on my part, but it sure is a very good suggestion!"

Wahahaha! Izayoi gave a loud laugh.

"Bu…But, to climb the spiritually infused mountain of the five digit region is a very arduous journey. How can I allow you guys to go to such an extent……"

"Listen carefully. This is an operation to investigate the real identity of the Demon Lord and not solely for you."

Izayoi shrugged his shoulders with ease.

Leticia who had heard the conversation from the side had also begun thinking in earnest.

"……That sounds about right. The plan seems like it will be effective. Though Little Garden may be wide, the Herald's main god

should be able to pinpoint the whereabouts of its Heralds."

"Right?"

"Yeah……Haiz, that sure was a blind spot that we overlooked. Once the Harvest Festival is over, let's go try investigate the Heavenly gates."

Leticia and Izayoi exchanged gazes and nodded to each other.

Following that, Izayoi turned to face Lily once more and he spread out his arms towards the farms as he started to laugh haughtily.

"And that's the case. Lily, your mother will be coming back very soon, so you have to think up a plan to show some results before that happens. The current person in charge is Lily right? If you let this kind of view greet your mother, I'm sure you will get a harsh tongue lashing right?"

Izayoi's smile had a hint of mischief in it. Though those words that he said were very much in a roundabout way, but it was obvious that he meant well for Lily.

"……Thank you. We will be sure to succeed in reviving the farm to its former state!" Lily seemed to be both happy and shy as her reddened fox ears were pressed on her head and she wagged her two tails while she said her thanks.

Lily who was beaming with smiles then turned her back towards Izayoi and Leticia as she ran off from the farmland. Leticia who had been seeing her off with her eyes was giggling as she turned to look towards Izayoi.

"Oh my, oh my, this is really surprising. Though I had that kind of feeling about you before……Master, you're quite good at looking after your comrades."

"It's a little late for you to realize that, you know? If I wasn't that kind of person, I wouldn't even want to lend a hand to help this kind of nameless Community."

"Hehe. Sure. Lily and I have to thank you, my master for your kindness."

"That's right. You guys can cry and thank me for being so kind."

Hearing Izayoi reply in such a deliberate manner, Leticia also started to laugh out loud.

After that, the both of them followed the little path that ran along the side of the farm to reach the place that was already said to be the allotted space to rest when work in the farms started. The whitewashed table and chairs were clean for there would be no problem using casual clothes at this place before the work in the farms officially started.

Sitting down at the table, Leticia took out the tea sets that were packed within the basket that she had carried, while Izayoi casually asked:

“But your curiosity sure is strong. So what if you have heard of my past?”

“It naturally has its uses. By knowing the past of my Master, there may be a thing or two that I can use to my advantage to get a hold over you.”

“Oh ho. I see. But if you have that kind of plan, you shouldn’t be saying it out.”

“Oh my. You’re right. Please forget the words that I’ve uttered previously, my Master.”

Leticia who was hurriedly taking out the teacups gave a slight smile.

Whether it was the conversational techniques that made people feel less bored, or the practiced movements, Leticia was a model for maids and it was to such an extent that no one would have believed that she was a former Demon Lord.

Curious about that point, Izayoi rested his elbow on the table while propping his face with his hand as he shot a question at Leticia:

“Hey Leticia. You are originally a Demon Lord right? Was it due to your defeat in the Gift Game that you became the subordinate of [No Name]?”

“Of course not. I’ve only had three masters till today and it’s you three.”

“But I’ve heard before that as long as one defeats a Demon Lord,

they can follow a certain procedure and as long as it meets the requirements they can tame the Demon Lords. Leticia isn't like that?"

"Oh, so you're referring to that." Leticia replied in understanding.

"About that……It's a long story. I will just give a brief summary. I had gone into a berserk mode after activating my [Authority of the Host Master] and hence my situation wasn't [Due to defeat from a Game that was solved], but the correct way to put it would be [The Game was forcefully cut off]."

"……Then what happens to the [Authority of the Host Master] that gets cut off forcefully?"

"It's straight away sealed within the berserk mode. In South Side……No, I didn't intend to tell anyone about where it's sealed. Even if it is known, I do not intend to release that seal."

Talking until there, Leticia gave a smile that seemed to hint of the arrival of her long awaited event.

"Okay, then it's now my turn to ask."

"Yea, I know that, you needn't rush me. Come to think of it, what does my maid want to know about?"

"Nn~" Leticia hesitated for a while.

Although in reality, she had wanted to know more about Izayoi's origin and his private life situations, but she decided to change the attack of her ball.

"Well……Firstly, let's talk about those headphones of yours. Was it something that your friend or acquaintance put together?"

"Nope, it wasn't anything that close as a friend of sorts. I've also mentioned it before that it's only a prototype created by a little urn from the same organization as me."

"……Organization?"

"Nn. It's a children's welfare organization that takes in orphans…… Or so to speak. But I guess there's no such organization in Little Garden right?"

Izayoi racked his brains looking for a way to put it in a manner that

could be easily understood.

On the other hand, Leticia was feeling relieved about not having asked his origin directly. Though Izayoi might not have taken offense even if she asked, her character was quite sensitive to these kinds of formalities.

[No……just giving it some thought, one would have realized that this isn't anything strange. For Izayoi, a human who possessed such a rare ability, he couldn't have lived a normal life in the other world. Needless to say, his biological parents would have been unable to maintain a normal mental state……]

---Leticia's thoughts were broken off at this point.

Thinking about it carefully, could a normal mortal even give birth to Izayoi who's a human unbound to the rules of nature?

It's said that Asuka is an Ojou-san of the financial sector. Then, it wouldn't be strange even if her ancestors had relations with others who aren't human. After all, large amounts of wealth tend to attract the gathering of demonic forces.

As for Yō's power, although it wasn't an innate power, but judging from the Gift that her father made, it's possible to deduce that Yō should hold the bloodline of a sculptor or alchemist[40].

Hence, Leticia had assumed at first that Izayoi would be similar to the other two, having his abilities flow from his bloodline.

[Though it's still too early to reject that possibility…….but this sure is nerve-wracking as I really want to know more details on him.]

Though it was obvious that she wanted to know, she continued to keep her silence. Holding the impatience in her heart, Leticia stuffed the taro cake[41], which was the accompaniment of the tea, into her mouth.

Perhaps he was aware of her feelings?

Izayoi started to take the initiative to start talking about his personal life, laying the foundations step by step.

"Although I had said about the organization, the me that was before the age of twelve had been treated like a ball for a soccer team. Being kicked from here to there. Ah! It wasn't my own relatives!

But from organization to organization or from organization to foster parents and from foster parents back to the organization.”

“……why was it so?”

“Do you still need to ask? Of course it’s because I’m too talented. Although there were as many people who wanted to adopt me as there were stars in the sky, they would soon return the goods within the trial period.”

Despite Izayoi’s loud laughter, Leticia couldn’t bring herself to smile and she could only quietly look down.

……No matter how much power he possessed, Izayoi of that time was still just a young child. Although it was just the foster parents who adopted him, but to be passed around to new surroundings for that many times, it shouldn’t have been healthy for the child’s development.

And so Leticia did not know what to say as she quietly listened to Izayoi’s narration.

“……Anyways, I’ve always been full of the spirit of service[42] from a very young age. Though I did answer all of their requests, it would seem that the stimulation was much too strong for them to handle and those who had volunteered to be my foster parents, not a single one of them hadn’t bowed down to me and said the same words ‘---We beg of you to go back to the organization!’

“And just like that, it was goodbye~ There was also one interesting guy who had tried to make use of me, but in the end, that guy had also ended in the same way……Hng! Now that I recall all these, I still think that it was such a boring ending. I’ve allowed myself to be used by him for that many times and in the end, it was still the same. Hence that was the last straw for me and I gathered the records of how he evaded his tax and the evidences of his embezzlement to send them all to the prosecutors and the television companies.”

“Hng!“ Izayoi drunk his tea to wash away the unpleasantness.

Seeing his reaction, Leticia understood instinctually …

The young Izayoi had actually liked the foster parents who had made use of him, or else he wouldn’t be scolding them with such agitation in his voice.

“When was that again? Oh, I think it should be when I was around ten years old. That’s right. After that, I decided that I will just send all those guys who had tried to make use of me to the depths of hell. But it wasn’t that fun in the long run and I began to use it to earn a lot of money, but I was soon tired of that too. Just when I found that I had nothing else to do---if I remember correctly…… I took the funds that I had collected to host a game?”

“Game?”

“Yes. Nn. It’s something similar to the Gift Games over here and the prize money was quite generous too. The only rule was ‘Find me within a week’, it’s simple right?”

“Nn……yeah.”

“I piled the stacks of bank notes that were to be used for the prize money to make a small hill and took a photograph of it together with a note that stated the rules of the game to distribute it onto the Internet. As a result, those fools started to stir and caused a small commotion……Even so, that only caught their interest initially as most of them had given up after three days and complained things like ‘It’s too difficult’, ‘Give some clues’, ‘The host doesn’t want anyone to win from the start’ and similar stubborn complaints.”

Izayoi shrugged his shoulders in displeasure.

At this point, Leticia’s expression had relaxed and she opened her mouth to ridicule his actions.

“Nope, that was definitely your bad, my Master. If you want to host a good game, then you should have chosen your participants more strictly. Although I do not know what the Internet is, but I guess it is basically a type of advertising platform of sorts’ right? If you display such a big prize and allow people to participate freely, it will only invite a large crowd of inferior participants and this is what we call truism.”

“Ha. That’s something I’m unable to refute. But please think of it as an act of mine when I was just a little brat and let me off the hook.”

The direct and cutting rebuke caused Izayoi to wear a wry smile.

Pouring himself a second cup of green tea, he continued to narrate his past with a little melancholy creeping into his eyes.

“---The place that I had hidden for the game was in the depths of a mountain that did not see much visitors from humans. There I was, lying in wait beside the pile of 30 briefcases stuffed full with the bank notes, but no one came. Moreover at that time, it was late summer and the humidity was high. My sleeping bag had also smelled bad and disgusting and I just had to meet up with a violent storm that crept over the area. Hearing the rumble of thunder in the mountains, I realized the reason as to why lightning and thunder had always been attributed to the phenomenon caused by gods. Although this body of mine would never be destroyed even if it were struck by them, but it sure had a powerful hold over a small child who believed in it’s magical properties.”

“……”

“Amidst the violent storm, when I finally realized that there was no hope of finding a person who could solve it, I felt as if everything around me was real stupid. When they asked for clues, I had answered their request but they did not understand; to let myself be found, I often wandered around by myself, but still no one found me. Although I was still a little child, but I was real angry and felt that the eyes of those bastards must have regressed to that of an olm’s[43]! In the end, I finally couldn’t stop the growing rage and had thoughts that ran along the lines of ‘Might as well destroy half of the world’, as I clenched my shaking fist while returning back to my hideout. And that’s when ……”

---Yes. It was during that day when the thunder rumbled while the winds and rain raged in the depths of the mountain that Izayoi had an encounter that will change his life.

---“Abandon your family, friends, wealth and all that you have in your world and come forth to Little Garden”.

Even though Izayoi had answered to such a summoning, he still had the one encounter in his homeland that he will never forget.

And that was with the person---Canaria and the encounter that changed his life.

Part 2

Izayoi listened to the rattling of the bus windows due to the violent storm as he reached out his hand to smear the condensation that had formed on the windows. It would seem that the violent storm was attacking this region. When he got off the bus, the driver had called out to him to ask him to seek shelter as soon as he can, but because of how troublesome it was, Izayoi decided to ignore the warning.

The abandoned facility hidden within the depths of the mountain was used as his hide-out and Izayoi veered off the paved road to the forked path that trekked up the mountain. Originally, this place was supposed to be allocated for an Eldercare facility, but due to the projected highway development program, the former plan had suffered a setback and was left to waste in the mountains without being dismantled.

Completing the journey through the mountain path that was much worse due to the stormy conditions, Izayoi shut the ruined glass door that was webbed with fractures as he stepped into the facility.

Picking up the towel that he hung on a broken-off pillar to dry his head, he then lit the lantern that he had prepared in advance.

Confirming the time with the borrowed light of the lantern, he noted that the time on his watch was 23:56. Seeing that it was only four minutes left before the time limit would be up, the young Izayoi who could not hide the disappointment in his heart gave a sigh.

“……It’s now 23:56 and the number of people who have found me is zero.”

“---It’s now 23:57 and the number of people who have found you is one.”

This would be considered as clearing the game right?---Hearing the light and carefree voice talking to him from the vicinity, Izayoi hurriedly turned around and pressed his back towards the wall as he raised his alertness.

It was the voice of a woman. An invader who had a voice that was as sweet as a songstress[44] was holding her breath as she hid in the

other corner of the dark room.

Originally thinking of tiptoeing to close in on the person…. Izayoi dismissed that idea after some careful thought as he saw no point in doing so and shrugged his shoulders.

"……Nn. That's right. You're the one who successfully cleared this game. As the host, I will congratulate you, so get your butt over here now."

"……This host sure has a foul mouth."

Though the tone was disapproving, the words still felt quite soothing to the ears.

Izayoi felt his interest in this woman grow with each word that she spoke from the shadows..

"Come to think about it, don't you want to give a self-introduction? 'Izayoi-chan'?"

"……Oh? How admirable that you are able to find that out."

"Of course, it goes without saying. This is a game to find you. Starting from the identity of the host would be the most sensible method.

"HngHng." The words that carried her pride echoed in the room.

"But, I sure didn't expect to meet such a problem child such as you in the world. Transferring through twenty four welfare organizations, switching between thirty-one pairs of foster parents, and amongst the foster parents, twenty-one of the adoptees have been convicted of having committed some kind of crime that they had done on the sly. To the extent of which no family or organization would want to accept you."

"Sounds quite accurate. But, to think that you would try to find this kind of brat. When it was even made clear to you that I was guarding against infiltration by setting up countless traps amongst the ruins that would have made a small mountain due to their numbers."

"Oh. Nn. That sort of level isn't a problem. But the piano wires were really very dangerous for anyone else so I got rid of them."

And the piano wires landed beside Izayoi's leg, having been thrown from the shadows.

These were the wires that he had set up as a trap surrounding the place where he hid the briefcases. And due to the fact that it was in the deepest recesses of the ruins and that the placement should have been too dark to identify……No. Compared to all these……

"……You actually didn't take the money and leave."

"It is because I'm interested in you that I've come."

"Of course that would be the case, wouldn't it?" A cheerful laugh echoed around the dark ruins.

"…Yeah, I guess. All the other participants seem to be struggling to find the location of the money, and they seem to want to decipher the location of the money from the photo."

"That's because the photo was purposefully taken to mislead the crowds. When taking the photo, I had purposefully allowed the background of the seaside horizon to be snapped as well. Although no matter how I put it, it was still too simple but still able to become a major factor in misleading."

"But to have so much money, wouldn't it be very difficult for a child to move it alone?"

"That's also a method to deceive the enemy. Besides that, I've also prepared many other clues to mislead. In the end, all of them were still easily misled! I should have been strict in my choice of participants."

"Tch!" Izayoi clicked his tongue in frustration.

In the end, a teasingly giggling laughter could be heard from the darkness.

"I understand. That kind of method might have gotten quantity but the quality would have declined, hence being unable to achieve the climax that you seek. Since you wanted to use the Internet to do a large scale propagation, you should have started the game from the test of [Finding the Contents of the Prize]. In that way, not only would you be able to choose the participants, it would have allowed the performance to have an increased credibility. The biggest flaw in this game……should be the fact that you allowed most of the

people to assume ‘How can there be a little brat who possessed that amount of money? It must be a prank.’ , right?”

The other party gave off a laugh that sounded musical and pleasant to the ears.

Izayoi was a little unhappy but that conversation had much that he could learn from, hence he did not open his mouth to say anything.

Following the sound of the heels clacking against the floorboards, the mysterious woman was closing in.

Raising his lantern to brighten the area, the features of the woman became clear before his eyes.

Confirming the woman’s appearance, Izayoi used a disapproving tone to question:

“……Hey, you climbed the mountain dressed in that?”

“Of course. These are the clothes that will bring me my victory every time.”

With that, the woman gave a pose with her hand on her hip.

The woman was dressed in a long white coat that was over an amethyst colored vest with spaghetti straps, with heeled black long boots to match. The most unique part about her that would leave an impression was the mismatched shell earrings that were on her left and right ear. This is because most of the shell that was hanging on the left ear had swirls that could only be formed due to genetic abnormalities and would be very rare indeed.

The face that had been illuminated by the light was an unexpected beauty with wavy golden short hair that seemed to bring out the delicate and proportioned facial features. As for her age, even if the standard was raised, it would still seem along the lines of the first half of her twenties.

“……I didn’t expect you to be so young, Oba-san.”

“Haha! Calling me young and then saying Oba-san? You sure are evil huh, Izayoi-chan. You should give me the respect and reverence and respectfully call me with a sense of defeat in your voice: ‘Canaria-oneesan'. That's how it should be.”

---Izayoi's eyebrows twitched a bit at that.

At the same time, he dismissed the previously cordial attitude as he started to release a sense of animosity towards Canaria that seemed strong enough to harm others.

"……I'm sorry but I cannot simply ignore those words you just said. What does 'with a sense of defeat' mean? Canaria-obasan. I am the host and you, the challenger. Then, you should be respectfully receiving the prize from me. That should be reasonable, right?"

Izayoi's eyes glinted with a sharp gaze that showed a fearlessness that was totally unlike a young child's normal behavior.

However, Canaria only drooped her shoulders and showed a very disappointed look.

"……I say, Izayoi-chan. I will return the question to you. Why did you want to host this game?"

"What?"

"Although I think it shouldn't be the case……but could it be that you had the 'I hope someone somewhere on this whole world will be able to find me'---that kind of lame pathetic feeling that led you to host this game?"

At that moment, Canaria's gaze seems to have shot through Izayoi.

……Or at least that was the illusion that Izayoi had experienced.

"If it were so, then I might have overestimated you. So I can honestly apologize. 'I'm sorry for I shouldn't have treated you as an equal nor should I have taken a child's game so seriously.'"

So what's the case? Canaria furrowed her neat looking eyebrows as she threw the question to him.

Izayoi stared at Canaria, stumped for words at that moment.

[My……reason to host this game?]

"Wishing for a person to find me?"---How could that be? Izayoi shook his head forcefully. He wasn't a person who had hosted the game for such a lame pathetic reason. Just thinking about that was already able to give him goosebumps.

Then what would be the purpose? Izayoi couldn't find the answer even after some thought.

Canaria arched back forcefully and spread her arms wide. A gust of wind that was similar to the one that was tormenting the ruins with rain outside billowed her long white coat, making her petite frame look much bigger.

"It can't be right? Izayoi-chan. The reason why you hosted the game shouldn't be so small and weak. The message that you wrote wasn't the complaining letter of a lost child, but it should be a letter of challenge that was written with a much stronger determination."

"……"

"The thing that you seek is for a challenger comparable to your own power, am I right? And this game is one that's precisely crafted to find that sort of person. Yet the participants were all regular mortals who were similar to some Tom, Dick,[45] and Harry who could be grabbed off the street……I say, Izayoi-chan. The reason why you feel unsettled and frustrated isn't due to the fact that there wasn't a person who appeared to solve it, but it's because you had originally wanted to host a game that could get the blood of people to boil and be a high tension contest. But in reality, the standard of the game was so low that it couldn't succeed."

"……Ugu!"

Bang! Irated and restless, Izayoi stomped through the floor boards.

It would seem that her words had hit their mark. The enormous strength of his foot, which was unlike that of a normal ten year old, caused the entire abandoned facility to shake and a violent gust of wind and rain started to blow in from a collapsed opening in the wall.

Canaria did not show any fear at the act of intimidation as she faced her back towards the lightning and closed in on Izayoi. One step at a time.

“I will repeat it once more. I’m the victor and you are the loser. This game was started by the challenge letter that you had issued and it was accepted by me. Since there’s a person who appeared and cleared your game, you are obliged to praise the victor as the position of a host. A person who cannot accomplish that should have never aimed to be a host.”

Kack! Canaria who had heeled to a stop before Izayoi looked larger now even though she was supposed to be a petite woman. The young Izayoi took a step back and dropped the line in a sullen tone.

“……You mean for me to admit defeat?”

“That’s right. Then as the position of the host, announce the proclamation of a winner who has cleared your game. And with that, this game will end.”

“……”

“And when your game has ended……Let’s start a new game together.”

---*What?* That came so suddenly, like a sneak attack, that it left Izayoi stunned.

Canaria seemed only to think of herself at this point of time as she continued on:

“That’s right. That’s the promise for the next game. Oh well, it’s good as well. For the next round, I will take on the position of the host. As long as I use the money that you have prepared, I can build quite a satisfactory stage……Hehe. This time, let me be the one to show you what a true host is.”

“So how about that?” Canaria tilted her head as she asked.

Because of how the topic had progressed in such an unexpected direction, Izayoi couldn’t help but gape in a daze without an inkling of what reaction to give at this point in time.

Just like that, he stared stupidly at Canaria for quite a while---before seeming to think of something as he pouted and asked:

“Then……the game’s prize is?”

“Prize?”

“Nn. Since it is a game that only both of us participate in, then there’s no need to prepare all those things that you discussed just now right?”

“Nn～ That sounds about right as well……Oh well, then let’s do it like this?”

Canaria bent her knees to match Izayoi’s eye level.

Following that, she then allowed their foreheads to touch and told Izayoi in a tone that sounded like she was pulling an evil prank:

“If I win……I can get a sharp tongued son.”

“……”

“If you win……Then I will always be your playmate for life. An additional condition would be: I will also prepare a great place for you to rest and relax.”

“How about that?” Canaria asked with a smile.

Izayoi had a troubled look, seemingly in a bind as he placed his hand behind his head to think for quite a while before nodding his head in an exaggerated yet swaggering manner.

“……Ah, I just can’t think of any other plan. So the victor of this crappy game will be you, Canaria.”

“Thank you. Then it is now my turn as the [Host] to invite you.”

Saying that, Canaria had tugged Izayoi’s hand and with young Izayoi, they walked hand in hand towards the door.

---The game between the two of them continued for almost two years.

Crossing the boundaries of countries, they traveled across continents. Going in search of the demon at Iguzau Falls, and had gone to confirm the end of the world……In the end, both of them reached a welfare organization.

[CANARIA foster home]---that was the children's welfare organization that was built just to accept Izayoi.

Chapter 5

Part 1

---Outer Gate number 7759175, [Great Waterfall of Underwood], Fir Bolg Hill[46].

“Wa～!”

“Ah～!”

Shish～ Asuka and Yō couldn’t help but let out gasps of surprise as the cool breeze blew into the hillside that they stood upon.

On one hand, they were surprised by the amount of moisture in the breeze, while on the other, the sight of the scenery before them stole their breaths away.

“My…….It’s beautiful! Why is there such a gigantic Water Tree!”

After walking out of the Outer Gate that stood upon the mound, Yō and the others had immediately gone to observe the sight that stretched from the foot of the mound. An underground city covered by a web like pattern of Tree roots and a floating stage that had cool water sprays dancing in the air were just a part of the view that greeted their eyes.

Even from such a distance away, one could also identify the Tritonis Waterfall that had its source flowing from under the Gigantic Water Tree. Water that cascaded down from the many sturdy looking branches seemed like miniature waterfalls from the Great Water Tree.

This was a tree that could produce water. The [No Name]’s water tree was a little sapling from this parent tree.

“Asuka! Look over there! Just a short distance down from the flow that leads to the waterfall from the Water tree! There’s a canal constructed out of crystal!”

Yō tugged at Asuka’s sleeve while exclaiming in a voice that seemed more excited than ever before in her whole life.

The water that poured out of the gigantic water Tree cascaded pass its lower branches to fall into the city below. Following the crystal decorated canals constructed under those spots, the fierce and lively

flow would then travel to the various interiors of the city. The sprawling roots of the Great Tree also extended outwards, seemingly with the will to cover the entire Underground City. The canals that were constructed on the fissures that ran through the ground due to the root action were reinforced with greenish crystals.

The giant Water Tree as well as the Underground City constructed by the excavation of the river bank.

The combination of the two regions was what people generally called [Underwood].

[……Oh? That canal's crystal….]

Asuka looked at the light that played upon the surface of the crystal as she tilted her head in response to a nagging thought. If she had remembered correctly, Asuka was sure that she had seen something similar in the North Side.

[That crystal…is a green tinted glass? I vaguely remember North Side having…]

"Asuka, up there!"

“Eh?” Now it was the sky and she had to lift her head upwards. Though Asuka felt that it was quite bothersome to keep switching between looking up and down, that thought was immediately changed.

For in many a dozen birds with antlers that were flying in the distance.

Asuka was dumbstruck as she looked up at the skies. In comparison, Yō was speaking animatedly as she observed the flock of birds.

“Birds that have horns…and those are antlers like a deer! It’s my first time seeing such a bird! Is it a type of Eudemon? Do you know what is it, Kuro Usagi?”

“Eh? Aa…Nn…ya…”

“Really? What’s the eudemon called? Can I go and have a closer look at it first?”

Yō showed a fair amount of enthusiasm that was rarely seen from her, but Kuro Usagi was troubled by it. Just at the right moment and following a gust of wind, a nostalgic voice sounded in the area.

“It’s been some time, my friend. Welcome to my hometown.”

With his huge wings that whipped up a strong wind, the one who appeared before them was the Gryphon of [Thousand Eyes]. He leaned his huge beak closer and Yō gently caressed his neck in reply.

“Long time no see, so this is your hometown.”

“Nn. [Thousand Eyes] is participating in the temporary street market and I’m tasked with carrying the guards on a special two wheel war chariot here."

Upon closer inspection, there really was an iron casted saddle and reins that were of a much better workmanship than of those he had before. It would seem that he had arrived with his contracted rider.

Looking towards Kuro Usagi and the others, he tucked his wings away and bent his front legs.

“It’s been some time as well, [Highborn of Little Garden] and my friend’s friend.”

“YES! It’s been some time!”

“Long…Long time no see……Is it right to reply that way, Jin-oniisan?”

“I…I guess it should be right.”

Asuka and Jin-kun being unable to understand the language Gry spoke had bowed and said their greetings just by judging the atmosphere of the other’s around them.

The Gryphon turned his head and pointed to his back with his beak, motioning for them to get on.

“It’s still a distance from here to the City. And due to the setting up of nature reserves in the South, you must be more alert when traveling here than compared to the East or North Sides. If you are willing, I can carry you guys over.”

“Is it really okay?!” Kuro Usagi exclaimed in excitement.

And because Asuka and Jin-kun weren’t able to understand their conversation, they could only tilt their heads in puzzlement.

Yō took a step back and gave a deep bow to the gryphon.

“Thank you. If it’s okay with you, may I know your name?”

“Of course. My rider calls me ‘Gry’. You, my friend can also call me by that name too.”

“Nn. Then just call me Yō. And these two are Asuka and Jin.”

“I got it. Yō, my friend. My friend’s friends are Asuka and Jin."

The gryphon flapped his wings to show his understanding as Asuka and Jin heard the whole translation of the conversation. Of which the both of them bowed their heads in compliment before climbing onto the back of the gryphon. Calico cat had also been carried in Kuro Usagi’s arms as she climbed aboard too.

Yō decided to ask about the strange birds that she saw while the others were climbing onto the back of the gryphon. Since she could fly by her own Gift and she was curious about those birds that gave her a bad feeling.

“Gry, are those birds with antlers a type of Eudemon too?”

"……Bird type Eudemon with antlers? Could it be Perytons?"

Gry lifted his head and scanned the area with his Eagle eyes.

Spotting the flock of birds that had antlers on their heads standing around the waterhole opposite the [Underwood Huge Waterfall], Gry gave a low fierce roar.

"Those guys……clearly we did warn them off many times not to come close to the Outer Gate when the Harvest Festival is hosted! Looks to me that they really want to kill humanoids."

"……Are they a type of man-eater?"

"No. Perytons just want to kill others."

"YES. In other words, they are a type of Man killer."

Kuro Usagi gingerly peeked from the gryphon's back as she clarified: "Though Kuro Usagi doesn't know the details, but I've heard that they are a foreign species that originated from Atlantis mainland."

"……Atlantis's mainland? The legendary island?"

"YES. And the shadow of Perytons are cursed from birth. It's said that it has a shadow that doesn't match its body shape."

"And the way to release the curse is---[Killing humans]. ---Hng, though it is not known which god had cursed them, but it sure is evil. Other than the ability to survive, they also possess the other reason to [kill humans]. Making them one of the examples of a typical [monster]. If it were any other day, it would be fine to let them off the hook out of mercy. But now with the Harvest Festival being hosted and to be loitering around given our repeated warnings……Yō, I guess I can invite you to try some Peryton meat skewers tonight."

Gry opening his mouth and gave a hearty laugh.

Flapping his wings and whipping up a gale, he then lifted his huge talons and lifted off with a kick off the ground with his lion hind legs.

"Wa……WaWa!"

In a blink of an eye, the limbs of the gryphon that could be

described as [stepping on air to move forth] have brought them a distance away from the Outer Gate. Yō had hurriedly grabbed onto the fur of the gryphon as she took flight as well. But to keep up with the speed of his was not a simple feat.

Even so, Gry seeing how Yō was able to barely keep up couldn't help but give praise:

"Really impressive. Though I'm only traveling at half my full speed, I really didn't expect for you to keep up with me after only two months."

"Nn…….Nn. It's because Kuro Usagi gave me a Gift that can help aid my flight Gift."

"YES! Yō-san's boots have been inscribed the symbol of Vayu[47] in Sanskrit as a training aid!"

Kuro Usagi joined in the conversation from the gryphon's back.

But Kuro Usagi was the only one who had words to spare.

Just after the take-off, Jin who was battered by the strong winds was immediately blown into the air. He who had only managed to stay aloft and not having tumbled down by now was all thanks to the safety rope that held him up in mid-air.

Not wanting to follow in Jin's footsteps, Asuka was firmly holding onto the reins. Her pride did not allow her to have such an unsightly performance like Jin.

As for Calico Cat that was carried by Kuro Usagi, he looked comparatively safe but in reality, he was actually struggling due to the wind's pressure that continued to press on him as they moved forward.

"O…Ojou~! Please tell him to s…slow do…down a little oooooowwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwwww!"

Though it sounded more of a cat mewing loudly, but Yō believed that his life was truly in danger and she quickly asked Gry to slow down.

"Gr…Gry. It's not going too well behind you, slow down."

"Hm? Ohoh, so sorry."

Gry reduced his speed in a huff and elegantly glided over the city.

Asuka with her tousled hair could finally relax slightly albeit still having to catch her breath.

Gently leaning out from the back of the gryphon, she looked down upon the City sprawled under them.

“Wa……The tree roots that grew outwards had actually grown around the excavated cliff walls and surrounded it.”

The Underground City that was excavated like a bowl-shaped depression in the ground was expanding its excavations along the tree roots. The underground city that’s located near the river was most likely safe from floods and storms due to the protection of the roots.

Despite the fact that man-made pillars could be seen a little here and there, the majority of them were built using the tree roots and material that looked similar to clay.

“I heard that the Great Tree of [Underwood] is of eight thousand years old and that this place is quite famous as a [Dyads Resting Place]. It’s also said that there’s now over two thousand faeries that reside in it now.”

“Nn. But it was just ten years ago that the Great Tree was caught up in the battle with a Demon Lord and had most of its roots destroyed. And now it’s been revived due to the efforts from many Communities coming together to help out.”

Hearing the term [Demon Lord], the others had met gazes momentarily.

Gry noticed nary a thing as he continued to glide while dipping himself downwards to start his spiraling descend to the City.

“The Harvest Festival also holds the significance of commemorating the revival and hence isn’t allowed to fail. It’s our wish to spread the word of [Underwood]’s revival to the East and North Side.”

Gry told them with a fierce determination in his voice. Flying through the network of roots that covered the area, he touched down at a dormitory for Yō and the others to alight. Spreading his wings once more, he looked to the skies in the distance.

“After this, I will be pulling the war chariot to chase off those Perytons with my rider. For if I do not take action, it might be possible for the other participants to be attacked. As for you guys, please have a pleasant time in [Underwood].”

“Nn. Got it. Take care too.”

As the conversation ended, Gry beat his powerful wings and left with a powerful gust of whirlwind.

Sending him off with her eyes, Yō asked Kuro Usagi with a troubled expression on her face:

“…So there are types that are [Man-killers][48] …What happens if I get a Gift from that Eudemon?”

“Kuro Usagi does not know either. But regarding the Perytons, I would say that it’s wiser not to associate with them. After all, you might get attacked or even be cursed. DO NOT force yourself to ASSOCIATE with them is the safest strategy.”

“…Okay? I got it.”

Hearing Kuro Usagi stress on her warnings, Yō’s shoulders seem to droop a little in dejection.

But she wasn’t given time enough to feel totally depressed for a familiar voice soon floated over from the somewhere above in the direction of the dormitory.

“Ah～! And here I was thinking who could it be…So it’s Yō! What’s up? You guys gonna join the Harvest Festival too……”

“I don’t suppose that I’ve ever taught you to talk in that impolite manner, Ayesha.”

Attracted by the rowdy conversation, everyone had turned their heads to look towards the source that came from above. Only to see the teenage girl Ayesha and the Pumpkin Head Jack of [Will-O'-Wisp] leaning out of the window and waving to them.

“Ayesha……you came here as well.”

“Ya. We also have many matters to think about on our end too! Heysu!”

Ayesha jumped off the window and landed before Yō and the others.

Swinging her prided blue twin-tailed hair and clasping her hands behind the back of her gothic outfit, Ayesha’s lips parted in a smile.

“Come to think of it, have you guys decided on the Gift game to

participate in?”

“No, we’ve just arrived.”

“Then you must take part in the [Hippocamp Riders] for I will be taking part as well.”

“……Hippo……what?”

[What’s that?] Yō cast Kuro Usagi a questioning look.

Kuro Usagi was about to explain when she decided to pass the job onto another and patted Jin’s back.

Ahem! Jin paused before launching into his simple explanation.

“Hippocamp is a Horse headed, fish tailed creature. It's also known as a [Sea Horse] of the Eudemons. It has a pectoral fin instead of a mane and its hoofs have webbed protrusions. Describing it as a half-horse and half fish would be accurate as well. I guess……this game that is called [Hippocamp Riders] should be a race that is held between people who ride upon them while they gallop in the water to the finish line.”

“……Really? There’re actually horses that can run in water?”

Yō had clasped her hands before her chest as she clenched her teeth.

It hadn’t been over fifteen minutes in this place and they already heard of two types of Eudemon and their information.

Yō probably was starting to realize---South Side was a treasure trove of Eudemons.

“It’s the biggest event of all the Gift Games hosted in the previous Harvest Festival that you definitely mustn’t miss! I’ll also be using my new weapon to win this time!”

“Got it. I will give it some thought.”

Ayesha snapped her fingers and smiled smugly.

On the other hand, Jack had arrived in front of Jin with his lightly flapping gunny robes as he gave a polite greeting.

“Yahoho. It’s been some time, Jin Russel-san. Thank you for taking

care of us during the battle with the previous Demon Lord.”

“No……We should be the ones who say it’s been some time.”

“Regarding the candle stands, we will be sending it over to Jin’s Community[49] after the Harvest Festival is over. The other daily essentials will also be prepared in due time……but it’s really unexpected for us [Will-O'-Wisp] to receive orders for a whole set of products from you! AyaAya, please continue to support our products in the future!

“Yahohohoho!” Jack gave a hearty laugh.

Asuka took a step forward and lightly lifted her skirts as she gave a curtsey.

“It’s been some time since we last met too, Jack. It’s good to see you so happy and lively today.”

“Yahoho! That’s because liveliness and happiness is my selling point! It’s good to see Asuka-san also looks healthy and well rested too. Out of carelessness, I had allowed Deen to steal the glory in the previous Game. May you allow me to take revenge for that one day---”

“Eh?”

Jin who was listening to the conversation let out a puzzled sound.

Asuka immediately changed the topic.

“Ri…Right! Jack! Aren’t you joining the game too?”

“Yahoho. My main job is being a Host. The role of a [Game Participant] is a tricky situation for me. I’ve only come to the Harvest Festival due to receiving the invitation letter, but the reason is for the wholesale marketing of daily essentials here.”

“Oh, so it’s only Ayesha who’s participating? Wouldn’t it be an assured victory for us?”

“Nn.”

“Oi!” Falling for their provocations, Ayesha was so angry that her twin-tails bristled behind her.

On the contrary, Jack only bobbled his pumpkin head as he laughed

Yahoholy at the scene before him.

People that could find humor at everything was definitely the category that Jack belonged to.

After that, the troop of [No Name] and the duo from [Will-O'-Wisp] made their way into the dormitory together to go to the VIP rooms prepared for them. Though it was a dormitory constructed out of wood and mud, the interior was unexpectedly solid in structure.

Although the structure was mostly built out of soil, the air wasn't too dry. This should be due to the water tree roots that produces moisture from time to time. The water tree roots that also jutted out from the reception area could also be taken as chairs. Yō chose one of them to sit in and she took a deep breath before giving voice to her thoughts of [Underwood]:

" ……It really is an incredible place."

"Yes. One would say that it feels very much like Nature, right? Compared to the North Side that is filled with buildings, it would seem that the South Side people are adapting to their environment."

"YES! It's said that during the start of the construction of Little Garden's cities, many Gods of fertility and Mother Goddess have visited the South Side. Being the region where the power of the Nature gods are at the highest, the biological varieties would also have some obvious changes."

"Is it so? But the crystals in the water canals seem to be of a Northern technique aren't they? I saw something similar in the [Rise of the Fire Dragon] festival."

"Eh?" Kuro Usagi tilted her head and rabbit ears.

While Jack who sat beside her replied in awe:

"Your eyes are quite keen. Asuka-san is right about that. Those crystal canals are constructed with the techniques of the North Side. I heard that the reason for the South being able to revive to this extent after the Demon Lord's attack ten years ago is all due to the techniques that she helped to contribute to the region.

"That…That's the first time that Kuro Usagi has heard of this news. Who could it be and where did the person come from…?"

Including Kuro Usagi, all the others were looking to each other for answers.

Jack brought up his hand to rest on his pumpkin head, at a location that would have been the equivalent of his chin, as he continued with the explanation:

“Actually, about the ancient faerie that resides above [Underwood] ……Due to the injuries it sustained from the Demon Lord attack ten years ago, it seems to be in a hibernation state currently. In view of that, the [Draco Greif] Alliance and [Underwood] formed an agreement to help protect the region and engage in the revival efforts in exchange for a place for them to stay in.”

“Then there’s a person in [Draco Greif] that is in charge of the revival……?”

“Yes. That person was originally from the North Side. I heard that it was very fortunate that the person had appeared at that time to make such a headway enough to start on their goal of restarting the old activities of before in just a short duration of ten years.”

“……So I see……The person sure seems impressive.”

Kuro Usagi placed her hands before her chest as she thought through Jack’s words.

Having suffered Little Garden’s Biggest Disaster---[Demon Lord] that attacked their lands and the timely arrival of the savior who helped with the revival.

And the relation between those two made it strikingly similar to the [No Name] and the problem children.

“Yahoho. We were just about to find the [Host] to say our greetings…... To meet at this time is surely a work of fate. Would the [No Name] like to come along too?”

“YES! Jin-bocchan, let’s go with them too!”

“Yea, that seems right. Well then, please wait for us while we will go place our packs into the rooms first.”

Yahoho～ Jack laughed heartily in response and went outside with Ayesha to wait in front of the dorm.

The [No Name] followed the lead of Jack and Ayesha, after having placed their baggage in their dorm rooms, climbing up from the Underground City as they made their way towards the Harvest Festival Headquarters that was located in the centre of the Great Tree.

Part 2

---[Underwood] Underground City, Spiraling Stairs of the Outer-walls

Due to the fact that the Underground city of [Underwood] was excavated in a spiraling semi spherical shape like that of a snail shell, the troop had to walk round and round the city to reach the surface. Though the depth was at most twenty meters, to walk along the sloping walls would still be a distance away from their destination.

However, the troop of [No Name] did not show any sign of getting tired of the journey as this was their first time visiting this city and their eyes were aglow with excitement. Moreover, the Harvest Festival was ongoing all around them with the smells of enticing food wafting into the air from the many temporary stalls that lined the road.

Yō's eyes were attracted to the stall that had a [Six Scars] Flag hanging on its sign.

"……Ah. Kuro Usagi, that stall is selling [White Cheese] that is grilled on the spot……"

"No, you cannot~… should wait till we thank the [Host] before we come back to try the food from the stalls……"

"Oishi neh."[50]

"When did you sneak away to buy that?!"

Yō ignored Kuro Usagi's comeback as she used her hand to pull at the cheese stick that had a long strand of half melted cheese trailing out from her mouth to it.

The cheese that was still steaming, had the unique texture and smoky smell of food that have been grilled on the spot, even if it were to be eaten plain, one wouldn't be tired of its flavor.

Two.

Three mouthfuls…Yō continued to eat while Asuka and Ayesha beside her were casting envious looks at her.

Noticing their actions, Yō passed the paper wrapping to them as she tilted her head with a smile:

"……Want a sniff?"

"Sniff?"

"Sniff? You ask if we want to have a sniff or not? Wouldn't one normally ask the question of "Want a bite?", but this fella decides to ask us "Want a sniff?"!"

"Nn. Because there's none left."

"And it's empty!"

"Did you want us to smell the lingering scent?! What are you thinking to play such a game of reality?"[51]

Yō licked her fingers.

The other two could only look longingly at the stall that had a gradually widening distance between them as they plodded on.

Jack who took the lead was hugging his pumpkin head as he laughed at the rowdy commotion of the girls behind him.

"Yahohohoho! Oh my, really! Kasukabe-san sure is interesting! To have such a lively comrade sure makes others envious, Jin Russel-san."

"Yes I agree. But if comparing the liveliness, I would think that [Will-O'-Wisp] should be of a level higher than us."

"Yahohohoho! Aiya, I feel really embarrassed now!"

The troop, that was by far noisier than any other Communities around them, climbed the net-like tree roots to reach the surface.

But from here on, the remaining distance was the real challenge. Yō lifted her head to gaze upon the Great Tree. Seemingly in a daze with her mouth open, she asked:

"……Kuro Usagi, how many hundreds of meters does this tree go up to?"

"I heard that the Water Tree of [Underwood] reaches to a total of five hundred meters. Though it isn't as tall as the cliffs found at the

boundaries of Little Garden, it should be one of the large class amongst the sacred trees.”

“Is it?……Then where is the place that we are heading to?”

“It should be around the middle.”

“ ……Is it?”

In other words, the height they were heading for was two hundred and fifty meters up and it would require stairs or other climbing footholds.

Yō didn’t even bother disguising her thoughts of how troublesome that was as it was clearly painted all over her facial expression.

“……Can I fly there?”

“Kasukabe-san, no matter how you see it, it’s you wanting to do things in your own way again.”

“Yahoho! I understand your feelings, but please do not let it spoil the spirit of teamwork. And we are allowed to use an elevator to reach the Headquarters, so it wouldn’t waste too much time.”

Elevator? The troop felt doubtful about what they heard.

However, Jack didn’t explain further as he continued to lead them.

Arriving at the bottom of a thick and sturdy looking branch, Jack walked into a container[52] constructed out of wood before waving to the others.

“Everyone, please come into this container. And when everyone is inside, please close the door and ring the bell, which is beside it, twice.”

“I got it.”

Yō pulled the rope that was attached to the container, causing the bell to ring.

Water began to pour out of the Water Tree’s burl[53] that was located quite a distance above.

They watched as the water gushed into another empty container that was connected to the container that Yō and the others stood

upon. As the pulley that connected the two containers started to rotate with a click-clacking sound, the container that they were in had begun to rise slowly.

“Wow!”

“We are starting to rise!”

“Yahoho! This is a mechanism that utilizes the weight of water that is poured into the other empty container to lift this passenger container up. Though it is a primitive method, but it is much faster than walking with one’s own feet.”

Exactly like how Jack said it, the Aqua powered elevator only required few minutes to reach the Headquarters.

The troop hitched the metal part of the container to the platform when they arrived at the top before walking towards the wooden path.

The path that was paved by the fitting of wooden planks in a straight line seemed a little dangerous but the worry soon vanished when they stepped upon it and realize that it was sturdier than it appeared to be.

Railings were also installed on the two sides to prevent people from falling off the path. As long as one doesn’t place his or her body over the rail to look over it, they wouldn’t be in danger of falling.

After following the path for a while, the flag of the Harvest Festival’s host, [Draco Greif] could be spotted by the troop.

“There’s one, two, three……seven flags? Is it organized by seven Communities?”

“Sadly, the answer is NO. It’s said that [Draco Greif] is made up of six Communities that come under an Alliance. The large flag in the middle is the Alliance flag.”

Kuro Usagi pointed to the flags that consisted of seven of them as she explained.

[One Horn]

[Two Wings]

[Three Tails]

[Four Footed]

[Five Claws]

[Six Scars]

And the piece that was hung in the middle, above all the others was the [Draco Greif] Alliance Flag.

“That is the Alliance flag?.....But why do they need to have an Alliance?”

“About this, when three or more Communities form an Alliance, they can create an Alliance flag to witness their pact. Though there are many different types of uses…… the most important reason would definitely still be to go against Demon Lords.”

“Against Demon Lords?”

“YES! For example when an Alliance’s Community is attacked by a Demon Lord, the other Communities of the same Alliance can force themselves into the Gift Game to give aid.”

“……Really? The others will come to help huh[54].”

“But if you want to ask if it is always possible for others to join in, I would say that it isn’t like that all the time. And it still depends on the Alliance Communities to judge whether or not to force their way into the Game. If the situation is deemed too unfavorable, there’s also the most opted choice of not helping. So I guess it is more of a self-comforting act.”

“Really?” Asuka replied as she turned to look at the flag. The other members had used the time the two had used to converse to bring forth their report about their arrival at the reception area of the HeadQuarters.

“We are Jack and Ayesha of [Will-O'-Wisp].”

“I’m Jin Russel of [No Name].”

“Okay. [Will-O'-Wisp] and [No Name]……oh!”

The Dryad[55] teen who was in-charge of the reception area suddenly lifted her head.

“May I ask if you are Kudou Asuka-sama of [No Name]?”

“Nn. That’s me. You are?”

“I’m one of the [Underwood] Dryads that participated in the [Rise of the Fire Dragon] Festival and I heard that I’m indebted to Asuka-sama for having offered a hand in the rescue of my younger brother……”

Oooooh Seeming to have the recollection of the incident, Asuka made the sound of understanding.

The other party should be referring to the time when the battle with “Black Death Demon Lord” was ongoing and she had once helped that young Dryad teen back then.

Confirming that she found the right person, the reception girl immediately bowed to Asuka in gratitude.

“It’s you, right? I’m really grateful to you, Asuka-sama for saving my younger brother’s life. It’s all thanks to your help that my Community can return safely as a troop without any loss in our numbers.”

“Is it so? That’s great. So the one who sent the invitation was you guys? “

“Yes. The Great Faerie is currently in deep sleep, so we have taken over in the task of sending the invitations. In addition, the new leader of [One Horn] and the representative of [Draco Greif] Alliance ---Sala Doltrake-sama has also specified to give you guys a hospitable reception.”

The troop of [No Name] looked at each other with surprise painted all over their faces.

“Sala……Doltrake?”

Asuka was perplexed as she tilted her head with her feelings shown clearly on her face.

She had an impression of that surname and hence asked Jin:

“Could it be [Salamandra]’s……”

“Nn……that’s right. Its Sandra’s elder sister, Sala-sama the eldest daughter. But I didn’t expect her to come over to the South Side……Could it be that the person who leaked the secret

techniques of the North Side is……”

“I’m afraid that the word ‘leaked’ is a baseless accusation, Jin Russel-san”

Just then, an unfamiliar female voice suddenly came from behind and the group hurriedly turned their heads as they were alarmed.

In the next moment, a gust of hot air blew caused the Great Tree’s branches to sway. And the source of the fierce hot air and raging winds is a girl who had appeared in the air and the Flaming Wings that she was emitted by her.

“Sa……Sala-sama!”

“It’s been some time, Jin. I’ve always wanted for the day that we see each other again. The [Highborn of Little Garden]-san behind, this should be our first meeting, right?”

Sala Doltrake dispelled the fiercely burning Hono no Tsubasa (Flaming Wings) and landed upon the tree branch.

The head of red hair that was exactly like the color her younger sister's hair was waving in the wind while the healthy bronze colored skin was boldly exposed. Her simple and scant outfit would even allow others to mistake her for a dancer.

Atop her head, above the set of determined eyes, there was a set, that looked more beautiful than Sandra's, of dragon horns that were parallel to her eyes. And those gave her a sense of a strong domineering spirit. If there were a need to measure her power as a Lesser Dragon, it would be easily understood with just a look at those horns.

Looking through the troop of people one at a time to familiarize herself with their faces, Sala smiled and said to the dryad girl in-charge of the reception area:

“Thank you for the hard work of working the receptions, Kirino. I will be here so, run along to play.”

“Eh? But if I leave this place, those participants that will come to say their greetings……”

“I did say that I will be here, right? Moreover a large majority of the Communities that will participate from the eve of the Harvest Festival have already arrived. Even if you leave the reception area, no one would blame you. Go and have some fun like the other kids and enjoy the Harvest Festival.”

“O…Okay!”

The Dryad girl who was called Kirino showed a happy expression as she bowed to Asuka and the others before making her way to the Harvest Festival plaza.

Sala who had stayed behind, looked at the crowd with a sliver of a smile at the corner of her lips as she solemnly bowed her head.

“To all of [No Name] and [Will-O'-Wisp], welcome to [Underwood]. It’s my honor to be able to invite the two well-known Communities of the lower Floors to this place.”

“……well-known?”

“Nn. But standing here to talk wouldn’t speak well of me. Come follow me in. I will serve you guys tea as we talk.”

Sala beckoned towards the troop as she entered the Headquarters.

Though the members of both Communities exchanged puzzled looks, they still accepted the invitation and entered the interior of the Great Tree.

Part 3

---[Underwood] Harvest Festival Headquarters, VIP room.

Yō and the others were invited to the VIP room that was nestled within the centre of the Great Tree. The windows in the room were directly overlooking the centre of the river and the Underground City of [Underwood] that was covered by the net like patterned tree roots.

Sala sat at the seat that had a [One Horn] Flag adorned on it, as she gestured to Yō and the others to be seated as well.

“Well then, let me reintroduce myself. I’m the current leader of [One Horn], Sala Doltrake. As everyone would have known by now, I’m a former member of [Salamandra].”

“Then, the crystal canals of the Underground City is……”

“It’s made by me of course. But don’t be mistaken. That crystal and the technique used to create it in [Underwood] is solely pioneered by me. Don’t make it seem as if I stole something out from my hometown.”

Jin rubbed his chest as he released a breath in relief. That was apparently something that bugged him quite a bit.

“Well then, I had originally wanted the representatives of the two Communities to do a self-introduction……but like what I had expected…Jack, she didn’t come, right?”

“Yes. Unless there’s a special situation, Willa will not leave the Community grounds, and so let me, the one who’s her strategist help her express our greetings to you.”

“Really? I really hoped to be able to invite the famous North Side’s strongest participant to come for a tour in the South Side.”

“…North Side Strongest?” Yō and Asuka asked together.

Ayesha who sat beside them had a proud expression on her face as she swung her twin tails while she answered:

“Of course that would be talking about our leader of [Will-O'-

Wisp].”

Sala looked at the girls before nodding and continuing:

“That’s right. [Demon of the Azure Flames]—Willa the Ignis Fatuus is a demon capable of crossing the boundaries of life and death freely and holds the power to interfere with the portals to the other worlds too. But little is known about her current situation. I heard that three years ago when I migrated to the South Side, she had suddenly decided to be more active and was sighted …there was even news of her having sealed [Maxwell Demon Lord]. If that were true, she wouldn’t be of the six digits[56]. Saying that she’s of the top most of the five digits wouldn’t be giving it excessive praise.”

“Yahoho……I wonder about the credibility of those words. But if you really want to talk about it, compared to a power of an individual, the five digit level focuses more on the average power of the Community. Even if there’s a super strong comrade, it will not be able to hold out for long.”

Jack laughed as he changed the topic. Even if one wanted to guess his thoughts from his expressions, one couldn’t possibly glean anything off that pumpkin face to be used as useful information.

Realizing that it was useless to continue in that direction, Sala shifted her sights on Jin.

“Just as Jack said, just by the power of a strong individual it is unable to maintain a five digit Community. For all it takes is the appearance of an enemy that can defeat that individual, the group will easily dissolve……And an example would be [Perseus] of the East side, right Jin?”

“EH?”

“Hehe. There’s no need to hide it. [No Name] of the lowest level defeated a five digit [Perseus] has already become a well-known piece of news. And subsequently defeating that [Black Death Demon Lord] should be you guys too, right?”

“That…That is…”

“No need to hide it. Because the current [Salamandra] doesn’t have what it takes to take down a Demon Lord on its own yet. I had already guessed that it must have been a strong hand that reached out to help from the side. Though I’ve left my hometown, please

allow me to express my gratitude…Thank You for Helping [Salamandra].”

“You…Your welcome…”

Sala bowed her head and her red hair had similarly hung downwards. Though her tone always had that pressure of someone of a higher status, but the strange thing was that it didn’t make people feel unpleasant. It was probable that that kind of tone just matched her temperament[57].

Sala swept their faces with her gaze before smiling cheerfully as she asked their opinions on the Harvest Festival:

“Well then, what do you guys think about the Harvest Festival? Was it enjoyable?”

“Yes. Though we’ve just arrived and hadn’t had time to shop around much, but to see it being full of life and laughter when it’s only during the eve of the Harvest Festival, it sure does feel great.”

“Thank goodness. That’s just great to hear. Though the Harvest Festival will only be officially started with the Gift Game events three days from now, but there’s still the street vendors that have temporarily been set up for the Festival that you guys can visit in the meantime. I hope that you guys will be able to enjoy your time in South Side where the customs are more open.”

“Nn. We planned to do that.” Asuka replied with a smile.

While Yō who sat beside her was gazing at the dragon horns on top of Sala’s head with eyes that seem to sparkle from within.

“What’s wrong? Are you interested in the dragon horns on my head?”

“……Nn. It looks really pretty. Different from Sandra’s. It’s not some horn that you adorn on yourself, right?”

“Nn. These are my horns.”

“But didn’t Sala join the Community that’s called [One Horn]? Is it okay to have two horns?”

Yō tilted her head as she asked. Whereas Sala smiled wryly as she answered:

“Indeed. We of the [Draco Greif] Alliance did name our Communities based on the unique qualities on the body of the members, though the numbers are not to be taken into consideration. Otherwise, the four winged races will not have any Community to join won’t they?”

“……Ah. Right.”

“Besides that, the Communities can be differentiated by the tasks that they are responsible for. [One Horn] and [Five Claws] to be responsible for combat; [Two Wings], [Four Footed] and [Three Tails] to be responsible for transportation while [Six Scars] covers the agriculture and commerce aspects. All those Communities together form the [Draco Greif] Alliance.”

“I see.”

Yō gave a short reply as she lifted her head to look at the Alliance flag.

The upper torso was of an eagle and the lower torso of a lion. A Gryphon that had four strong limbs and huge feathery wings.

If a difference were to be pointed out between this Gryphon and a normal Gryphon, that would be the dragon horn that grew from its forehead. And one of its two dragon horns was broken off tragically.

Looking at the flag, Yō felt that something was amiss and she tilted her head quizzically.

“……Eh? Then what does [Six Scars] represent?”

“It’s said that a Gryphon that transforms to its true form of a [Draco Griff] has six scars on its body. If according to the classification of the Communities….Nn. It should be open and accepting to all the various races. After all, the knowledge of Commerce or Agriculture is not something that can be picked up with just any kind of lifestyle.”

“Oh I see.”

“During the Harvest Festival, you guys will also see the flag of [Six Scars] quite often, right? I heard that they have brought in many exotic plants of the South Side this time round. Please feel free to go and have a look if you have time to spare.”

Yō nodded her head---and just happened to meet Kuro Usagi's gaze.

Pak! She clapped her hands, seeming to have remembered something suddenly as she asked Sala:

"Talking about the exotic plans of the South Side, is there……. Rabbit-Eating Plants and the like?"

"Do you still need to bring that topic up again?! That kind of fearsome and nonsensical plant couldn't possibly……"

"There are."

"Really? There are?"

"How can such a stupid thing exist?!" Kuro Usagi's ears stood erect on her head as she shouted.

Yō's eyes sparkled as she continue to press on:

"Then……is there any Kuro Usagi-Eating Plant?"

"That's why I asked if there was any reason for you to target Kuro Usagi!"

"There is."

"How can it be! Just where and whom is that idiot that thinks of keeping this kind of scary plant that targets rabbits?!"

"Hmmm. You asked which idiot... Here's the order…"

*Pak! Kuro Usagi snatched the order form from Sala's table top.

The order was written mischievously like this:

[A plant that targets Kuro Usagi: Devourer★Kuro Usagi Plant. Capable of using 80 tentacles to transform the target into a lewd…]

Crumple!

"---……HngHng……There's no need to confirm the name to know that there's only one idiotic culprit in the entire world that would do this kind of nonsense."

Kuro Usagi drooped her head lifelessly. Tears of sorrow quietly flowed down her face.

Kuro Usagi will not even bring this up as a complaint~! She faced the large river as she vented out what seemed to be a howl from her soul, while all the others cast their pitying gaze on her back.

Not too long after, Kuro Usagi who was deep in her depressed state stood up. Her black hair had also undergone a change to sparkle with a glow of a dark vivid red.

"……Sala-sama, I deeply thank you for extending the invitation for us to join the Harvest Festival. But due to some unforeseen circumstances, an urgent matter has arose that requires my immediate attention. So Kuro Usagi will now take her leave. Excuse me."

"Is…Is it? The Rabbit-eating plant should be in the exhibition plaza of the lowest level."

"Thank you. And farewell!"

"Wa….Wait a while, Kuro Usagi!"

*Swish! Kuro Usagi grabbed the collars of all the [No Name] members and left without turning back her head.

Sending off Kuro Usagi that was carrying the three others with fluid movements as she hopped away, Sala muttered to herself in a daze.

"Oh my, looks like it's more tiresome than what the rumors said."

"Yahoho! Indeed! Well then, since we have already said our greetings, let's bid our farewells here as well."

"Oh, no, Wait. I still have something to discuss with you guys. If it's convenient, I would like you to help me bring the message to the [No Name] as well."

"Oh?" Jack and Ayesha glanced at each other.

Sala put on a more serious expression as she told the two:

"Please help me tell them that I hope for them to come round for dinner tonight. Regarding the Demon Lord that attacked [Underwood] ten years ago---the Titans, I have something to discuss."

Part 4

---[Underwood] Underground City Lowest level, Exhibition Storage Warehouse.

BRUUUUUUM! A deafening sound of thunder resounded in the area.

The fierce lightning tore through the Rabbit eating plant that was almost five meters tall.

Tentacle Branches, tentacle flower petals, tentacle tree sap……the mutant plant that grew all sorts of tentacles was pierced through by the lightning that was released by a Kuro Usagi with cardinal[58] colored hair who was in a rage. And it was soon burnt to a crisp before collapsing.

Yō picked up a charred piece of the Rabbit eating plant that was pitifully blown to smithereens and gave a long sigh.

"……what a waste."

"Please refrain from that kind of idiotic words! To burn such an abomination of a plant, that goes against the laws of nature, to turn it into fertilizer is obviously the best choice!"

Kuro Usagi turned her face away with a "Hng".

After that incident, the group of [No Name] had gone to tour the Harvest Festival till sunset.

While walking past the various temporary shops that sprung up in the [Underwood Underground City], they picked out the seeds and seedlings that they felt were best suited for their own farm; tried on many of the colorful traditional garbs that were dyed with the pigment of flowers; and was surprised by the quality of the fur products that were unique to that region, etc. Passing their time happily and comfortably.

Though many saplings and farm animals had caught their eye, they all agreed that it wouldn't be too late to buy the items after receiving the prizes from the Gift Games and decided to put the

purchase on hold.

Other than the [Hippocamp Riders], they also finished the registration for other Gift games. After it all ended……

Kuro Usagi looked up at the sky that was dyed with an orangey hue as she muttered:

“It’s about time to return to the dormitory.”

“Nn.”

The troop then followed the spiraling walls as they moved upwards to return to the dormitory assigned to them.

Gathering in the reception room, Yō and the others sat on the chairs as they reviewed their day’s experiences.

“The Gift Games for the eve of the festival sure is less than I expected.”

“YES! The main focus before the official start of the Festival is on the temporary street stalls. For example, there would be a Community that performs a cultural dance tomorrow. Hehehe, I’m really looking forward to it～♪”

Kuro Usagi waved flopped her rabbit ears left and right. She looked so happy that she looked ready to start hopping in joy at any moment.

Though she was always cheerful and high spirited, she definitely was more cheerful this time.

Come to think about it, Kuro Usagi seemed to have looked forward to coming to [Underwood] right from the start.

“……Um, Kuro Usagi. Could it be that you’ve always wanted to come to [Underwood]?”

“Eh? Nn….yes. Kuro Usagi always had that interest because Kuro Usagi’s comrade that had cared for her for a long time was born in the South Side.”

“Comrade? It means…”

“Yes. One of the comrades that were stolen by the Demon Lord…… and also the one who invited Kuro Usagi to join the Community

when she was young."[59]

Hearing that, Asuka and Yō looked to each other in surprise.

"……Nn……Then……"

"It means that Kuro Usagi, you weren't born in [No Name]?"

This was a surprising news to them. Seeing how Kuro Usagi had such a selfless attitude in contributing to her Community, one would naturally expect her hometown to be of the [No Name]. Kuro Usagi clasped her hands before her chest, as though she was holding onto an important treasure as she muttered:

"Yes. I heard that Kuro Usagi's hometown sits upon the upper echelons of the East Side. Seemingly of the [Moon rabbit] country. But due to the devastating destruction wrought by a Demon Lord, the [Moon Rabbit] kind have been separated and mostly killed. It's only after that when the current [No Name] found Kuro Usagi wandering around without anyone to depend on and accepted Kuro Usagi as a part of their Community."

Kuro Usagi clasped her hands tightly, and seemed to smile that told of undoubtable bliss.

But Asuka and Yō couldn't find any words to say as they looked to each other once more.

If her words were true, then that would mean that Kuro Usagi was robbed of her hometown by Demon Lords. Not once but twice. Her attitude of wanting to contribute, besides her identity as a [Moon Rabbit], might be connected to her past.

"To repay the debt of the Community that adopted Kuro Usagi as a companion……Kuro Usagi will definitely protect the [No Name] Community grounds. And I will also introduce our new and great companions: Yō-san, Asuka-san and Izayoi-san to everyone!"

Kuro Usagi raised both hands in enthusiasm to give herself a little encouragement.

Yō and Asuka looked at each other and smiled slightly.

"……is it, then we will look forward to that day."

"Me too…Come to think about it, that…what is Kuro Usagi's

benefactor like?”

Hearing Asuka’s question, Kuro Usagi’s gaze seemed to drift and a smile appeared at her lips.

She was probably reminiscing her past before her very eyes.

Following that, Kuro Usagi gazed upon a shaft of red Sunlight that shone in from the dormitory’s window as she lightly spoke of the name of her benefactor.

“---Her name is Canaria-sama. She once took on the position as the Community’s strategist.”

Chapter 6

Part 1

---Year 201X, 5th of May. At the front door of CANARIA foster home.

A few days after receiving the news of Canaria leaving a will.

Sakamaki Izayoi came to the children welfare agency [CANARIA foster home].

Standing before the building that was blindingly white against its surroundings, Izayoi stood with arms akimbo as he looked up at it.

“CANARIA foster home……It’s been a long time since I last returned to this place.”

Izayoi gave a throaty laugh as he looked at the entrance. Constructed to be a five storey[60] building, the pure white appearance would probably give the wrong impression of being a research organization to people who see it for the first time.

But a closer look would refute that impression for the walls were covered with the graffiti of little children scribbles.

Even so, Canaria had been adamant about the color of the wall paint to be a pure white. And the reason was---

“Because that would allow the kids to play however they want to.”

……In other words, it was to make it easier to vandalize that they chose the color of the paint to be white.

If any other children welfare organizations that were lacking in funds happen to hear of this, they would be quite infuriated.

Izayoi had also had a hand in vandalizing it in the past, but he had soon grown tired of it.

“It’s been some time since I last saw them. Might be a good idea to see those rascals……oh?”

Izayoi’s hand was on the door when at that very moment, the doors were pulled open by itself from the inside before his hand could do the job.

And at the same time, two teens, a boy and a girl came out to welcome him.

“Hey, Iza-nii! Homura and I have waited for a long time!”

“I’ve not been waiting……Welcome back, Iza-nii.”

“Nn. Thanks for the welcome Suzuka, Homura.”

Izayoi spread his arms wide to warmly reward them. Similar to Izayoi, they had been taken in by CANARIA foster home when they were just kids.

The girl with a healthy tan on her skin and a pineapple shaped hairstyle[61] was Ayazato Suzuka.

While the bespectacled boy with messy hair was Saigou Homura.

When Suzuka was working hard to climb onto Izayoi’s back, Homura tilted his head and asked:

“How’s the headphones I made?”

“Still working fine.”

“Really? Okay.”

“Iza-nii, there’s something more important. That weird lawyer keeps hanging around here. He’s really scary～ quickly make a short work out of him and chase him off”

Suzuka wildly gesticulated as she sat on Izayoi’s shoulders.

“Oi! Oi! That’s the visitor for me, right? Visitors staying for two to three days without leaving shouldn’t be a new thing to you guys.”

“That’s not wrong……but the Uncle this time is... how should I say…Really Very Freaky to the point where he would make someone feel that it is a horror of a [Perverted] nature.”

“Pervert?”

“Yea. Though he could be counted as quite handsome with the black suit that fits him, but he said this to me: ‘Miss, would you like to have tea with me? With marriage as the topic.’ That was really scary. And it seems like he has also said the same stuff to the others.”

"……Oh? Then I guess it's really my bad."

Izayoi grabbed the heels of Suzuka who was sitting astride on his shoulders and lifted it up forcefully.

Suzuka who had lost her balance gave off a scream of *Kya～* as she fell off Izayoi's shoulders only after turning 3 times.

Leaving her behind, Izayoi entered the CANARIA foster home.

The middle aged woman who was manning the counter spotted him and immediately put on a look of disgust.

"……It's been some time, Izayoi-san."

"There's no need to put on that look of disgust. I will leave immediately after getting the last will and testament."

"It would be for the best if you could do that. And I've already helped to settle your withdrawal procedures from school."

"Oh really, sorry to trouble you about that. And my visitor?"

"That mister said that he's going for a stroll in the compounds. I will tell you when he gets back. So just sit and wait at the reception area for now."

"Oh really?" Izayoi waved to the woman at the counter before sitting down promptly.

Just when he got seated, a pair of petite hands reached from his back and hugged Izayoi's neck.

"Hey Hey Iza-nii, what about that perverted lawyer?"

"I heard that he's taking a stroll in the compound. I guess he must be trying to pick up the other rascals?"

"Huh?! Really?! Then everyone's in danger!"

Suzuka ran off quickly with her hair bobbing up and down[62] as she did.

After sending her off with his gaze, Izayoi laid back on the chair to relax his whole body into it.

However, the peace was immediately broken by a messy haired

Homura who leapt into the chair beside his.

“This is my new piece of work.”

“Ah?”

“Completed work Headphone Number 2, [Crescent Moon No.2]. For you.”

Though the headphone was created by Homura who had just hit ten this year, its appearance was quite exquisite and the ear muffler portion had the registered trademark pasted upon it---a symbol of flame

Though Homura was quite a laconic person, but when it came to the creation of daily necessities or equipment, he would give it a passion that shouldn’t have been found in a child.

Twirling the headphones, Izayoi gave Homura a wry smile.

“Even if you say it’s for me,….Since you wanted to give something, shouldn’t it be something else other than a set of headphones? Why’s there a need to give the same type of item again?”

“But Iza-nii has no use for items like clocks and such.”

“That’s true. But the Celestial globe[63] that you made the other time was quite good too. It’s still placed in my room until now.”

“……That was only completed with the help of Canaria-sensei. I wouldn’t have been able to do it by myself.”

Homura lightly bowed his head.

Izayoi turned his head away as a “Tch!” escaped his lips.

“Canaria-sensei ……really passed away didn’t she? I thought that she wouldn’t die no matter what happened.”

“She died due to an illness and that wasn’t much of a choice was it? Moreover, the illness was one that had an unknown cause. Even if it were Canaria that stupid Mum, she wouldn’t have any way to escape that.”

“……Nn.”

Homura bent his head further, depressed.

Izayoi showed a very troubled look as if it were a drudgery as he lifted his head to look up at the ceiling before placing the new headphones on his head.

“Huh? Oi, Homura. Isn’t this thing’s head strap portion a bit too long? The whole thing is swaying on my head, you know?”

“No problem. You just need to hold the ear cushions close to your ear and press the adjustment control button beside it and it will automatically adjust it to the shape of your head. You can say that it’s the most consumer friendly product with the comfort of the user in mind.”

“Hmm? The part that you focus on sure is quite interesting.”

KaChing! As the head band portion was folded, the ear cushions tightly pressed against Izayoi’s ears.

“Oh, I see…… But this is a little too tight for me. It might even cause the sounds to be muffled and not as clear as it would have been.”

“Wu……Then I will adjust it for you. Here, pass it over for a while.”

Izayoi took it off and was about to pass it to Homura----but his hand froze.

Because the headphones that he just took off his head was of a different appearance than before.

“……Oi, Homura. What’s up with this headphone’s appearance?”

“It’s the result of the adjustments in the head band. The folding of the headstraps for the adjustments will always end up like this no matter how I tinkered with it and hence it’s appearance.”

“No. That’s not the point. Have a good look at it yourself. No matter how you look at it, this toy seems to be nekomimi[64].”

“Nn. [Crescent moon No.2] will use the excess adjusted headband to form cat ears. That will definitely be a hit amongst the girls.”

“Oh? So you mean that I look like a girl?”

“Iza-nii is my walking advertisement. You must always wear my headphones and help advertise my [Crescent moon] series.”

“Oi Oi, to use me as your model will cost you quite a bit you know?”

“Then I will repay that sum on the day that I become famous.”

Homura got up from the chair of the reception area after giving his simple reply. Probably going off to modify the nekomimi headphones.

Having gotten up and walked a bit with his back facing Izayoi, he suddenly stopped and looked back.

“……I’m going back to my room. Do you need me to carry your bags up too?”

“Huh? Oh, yea sounds good. I will drop by later for them and the headphones.”

“Got it. I will wait for you to drop by then.”

Homura carried the bags and left for real this time.

Alone once more, Izayoi let himself sink into the chair again.

[……Nothing has changed even though I’ve been gone for a year.]

Izayoi looked up at the stains on the ceiling and gave a wry smile.

---CANARIA foster home was operating with the pretext of taking in children that were orphaned and with the goal of finding foster parents for them. But the reality was quite different.

This was the place where the children who are labelled as problem children due to normal people being unable to cope with their special needs gather ---Even with that kind of explanation, it might still sound similar to a normal children welfare organization.

But the word special held a much different meaning for them.

It wasn’t a word that described their family background but it meant that each and every boy or girl here was gifted with an extraordinary talent or ability. And that was what Canaria had decided to accomplish when she decided to take Izayoi under her wing.

Though it may be so, there wasn't any other boy or girl that possessed the same incredible power that Izayoi harbored within him. When compared to him, theirs would definitely be seen as trivial abilities.

Take for example, Saigou Homura. As long as it's something that he has taken apart with his own two hands, he would be able to analyze the interior structure and components of the equipment. And given enough time, he should be able to assemble a computer from various spare parts.

That youth had a massive ability in his [understanding], [reassembling] and [creativity] and that was so scary for normal people that they sent him off to CANARIA foster home.

[……But the one who would accept these special children, Canaria wasn't around anymore. And this CANARIA foster home would probably end with Homura and Suzuka's generation.]

Izayoi caught himself sinking into woes that were so not his usual way of doing things and that just made his wry smile much deeper.

Looking at his digital watch to confirm the time, he realized that fifteen minutes had passed. Thinking that it wasn't much of a plan to continue waiting, Izayoi stood up from the chair.

Just then, he felt a presence behind him.

"---You are Sakamaki Izayoi-chan, right?"

"……"

Izayoi was surprised inside.

He didn't know how far apart they stood from each other because he hadn't turned his head yet, but the distance should be around five meters. Even if he were deep in his thoughts just now, this was still the first time ever that a person managed to get this close to Izayoi without him sensing their presence.

[Oh?.....Looks like he's more interesting than described in the rumors.]

Thinking about it in more detail, he realized that there wasn't

anything to be surprised about.

If the other party was a lawyer employed by Canaria to pass her will, there would be no doubt that he was no ordinary person.

Izayoi who was starting to feel interested in this man who stood behind him, happily turned to face him.

"……"

But he was stumped for words once more.

Suzuka had said that this person was a [Black Suit Strange Uncle]. And he saw that she was right about that.

But that wasn't the main problem. It was his dressing that didn't fit in with the normal daily dress of others in the country of Japan: A swallow-tailed tailcoat with a black round topped bowler hat with a single round monocle.

That man who looked about twenty-five years old with a dressing that could be described as a [Fake English Gentleman 3 Piece Getup] was looking at Izayoi while smiling.

"……Ah, right. You seem to have a good taste for that black round topped bowler hat."

"Nn? Oh, Thank you. But before the praises, I would like you to answer my question. Are you Sakamaki Izayoi-chan?"

"That's right."

While replying to the question of the other party, Izayoi was also scrutinizing the man in the tailcoat.

Though he appeared to be around the age of twenty-five years old, but the demeanor that he showed seemed much older than that age and well-practiced. The facial appearance that seemed to fit well with his physique seemed to make him feel pleasant.

But the impression that people will not be able to miss should still be the eye that had this intense fiery gaze behind the monocle.

Izayoi had initially thought that the other party was measuring him up but it didn't seem like it. For Izayoi could tell having had the judging glares of adults from a very young age, he immediately realized that he did not feel that particular unpleasant feeling that

would have been elicited from him from such a gaze.

That steady and intense gaze from the eye behind that monocle caused Izayoi to feel as if he was being read like an open book.

"……what an unpleasant gaze."

"Haha, I've been told that many times. Canaria had also said that when she first met me."

"I guess so. So, where's the will?"

"I've borrowed a room to pass it to you there. After all with that quantity, it's too heavy to carry it around on me."

The man in a tailcoat strode towards the interior of the compound.

Izayoi solemnly followed behind him

The Sun in May was less intense due to the cloud cover in the sky and that made the sunlight feel warm and comfortable. The wind was also slightly cool on the skin.

The diurnal temperatures were wide ranging as the crossover to the next season had arrived. As the wind blew through the corridors, the moisture in it was a sign typical to the precursor of rain.

Izayoi lifted his gaze to the darkening summer skies as he continued his way down the corridors. Finally reaching the room that was the destination, Izayoi who had followed the man in a tailcoat into the room was met with a large pile of papers in the centre of the room. And that immediately elicited an impatient response from him.

"Oi! Is that some kind of novel?"

"I guess it is her own autobiography? Anyways, you being her foster son should have the obligation to surrender to your fate and read it like a good child."

Shifting a chair nearer to the window, the man in a tailcoat pulled down his bowler hat lower as he sat in it without saying anything further.

……He actually threw away his duties to take an afternoon nap? Even Izayoi was stumped by this sight and just looked blankly for a while. But the reason today wasn't for this man and Izayoi gave in by sitting down at the table.

Dutifully, he untied the strings that tied the paper wrapped parcel of over 10 meters in depth and prepared himself to begin reading Canaria's autobiography ---slowly---

Part 2

---[Underwood Underground City]. Kasukabe Yō's room.

After leaving the guest reception room, everyone decided to return to their own rooms to unpack their baggage and went their separate ways.

Returning to her room, Yō fell straight towards the bed that was made out of a hollowed out Water Tree root that was stuffed with something similar to the weaving of the thatch roofs. Though it might be so, it wasn't as if she had directly dropped herself straight into a litter of tree roots.

But she lay on the white sheet that covered the tree roots.

"……the smell of tree roots and thatch."

Yō was enjoying the calming smells and almost drifted into sleep there and then.

Through her droopy eyelids that went so heavy with the desire to sleep, Yō lifted her head suddenly as though she just remembered something.

"……Cannot. There's no time to sleep."

That's right. Yō had arrived in the South Side with a strong determination and a promise to keep. Though it might be impossible to have a hundred new friends, but if she didn't get to know more Eudemons of different kinds, she wouldn't be able to show her face to Izayoi who had given her his rights.

"……Come to think about it, would Izayoi have found his headphones by now?"

Yō suddenly thought of the headphones that Izayoi always wore on his head. She also remembered the Flame-like logo that were on those headphones as well.

That logo was similar to the brand that dad had liked as well.

[Dad said that it was an [Irreplaceable exquisite antique that couldn't be found currently]……Could Izayoi's headphones be the

same too?]

Maybe it was due to that reason which made Izayoi look for it so desperately. Even so, the moment that the three of them were summoned to this world of Little Garden, all the belongings that they brought along with them would also have become items that are unique and irreplaceable……

"……Nn, thinking about it will get me nowhere. I will ask him when I get back then."

Yō decided to change the direction of her thoughts. Rather than worrying about Izayoi, Yō would like to prioritize the promise that they had. Luckily Calico cat had gone for a stroll and hadn't return. If she wanted to move alone, this would be the only chance for her.

"Firstly, the change of clothes and then head outside of the suburbs. The wildlife reserves should hold many different types of Eudemons."

Yō rustled through her baggage as she finally got to unpacking it.

From a personal perspective of living, Yō did not find a need for excessive items.

Hence her bag was small and should only contain the minimum amount of necessities---as such, when she spotted an item that she had no recollection of, appearing in her bag, Yō's mind was instantly blanked.

"……Huh……"

How did……She managed to squeeze out a low moan.

'That' which had dropped out from her bag……was definitely…… Definitely not something that should appear with the other items in her bag, especially for Yō.

"Eh……Huh? Huh?"

The sudden impact caused Yō to feel dizzy as she got to her feet and fell head first to knock on the pillar in the middle of the room.

But she didn't mind that pain. Because……the……the appearance of such an item in her possessions would definitely cause people to assume that she had purposefully resorted to underhanded means to

get Izayoi's---

"Yō-san! It's an emergency!"

*Bang!*Kuro Usagi suddenly burst into the room by slamming the door open forcefully. Yō quickly hid the item behind her back in a hurry.

However, accompanying a loud sound, the surroundings began to shake violently, causing Yō to fall backwards on her butt in a sitting position.

"Wa……Earth……Earthquake?"

"No! It's an attack! [Underwood] is currently under that attack of a Demon Lord Residual group! We should also go lend a hand immediately---"

---Kuro Usagi's words stopped as she had suddenly clamped her mouth shut.

This is due to the item that dropped behind Yō that held her unwavering gaze. And that was Izayoi's headphones.

"Yō…Yō-san? Why is Izayoi-san's headphones here……"

"No……It's not!"

Yō was getting more confused. This was understandable since she really didn't know anything.

Even if she wanted to defend herself, her laconic nature was a burden to her and she did not know what else to say, leading to an awkward silence between them.

Just when Kuro Usagi couldn't stand it anymore and was about to break the silence------A huge arm smashed through the dormitory walls and right between the both of them.

“Kya!”

They were both knocked flying at the same time. Yō tried to assess the outside situation from the hole in the wall but found herself staring into a huge eye that was looking inside from the other end.

Yō couldn’t repress her natural instinct to jump away. While the attacker couldn’t be bothered by her reaction as it used its huge arm to sweep the whole dormitory off its foundations.

“Yō-san!”

Kuro Usagi grabbed Yō who was off-balanced into her arms,

seeming to protect her as she leap clear of the dormitory.

Witnessing the full size of the attacker for the first time, Yō said in a low and trembling voice:

“Ti….Titan!”

That’s right---A huge body of a height around ten meters appeared before them. The arms that held a huge long blade were as thick and sturdy as huge tree trunks.

A fearsome glare was emitted from behind a mask where two holes were drilled for the eyes.

Kuro Usagi eyed the Titans and prepared herself for battle.

“YES. They are [Humanoid Eudemons]--- also known as the Titan tribe!”

“Gahouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhou----!”

The titans who were wearing their masks swung their hair while they gave off a fearsome roar before starting towards them to launch their attacks.

The place that was chopped by the huge sword had already formed a crater and the vibrations shook the whole Underground city. The outer walls had also started to crumble due to the impact. If it weren’t for the Great Tree’s tree roots to support them, they would have long been laid to waste.

Yō was dodging the slashes of the huge sword as she asked Kuro Usagi:

“You said that these are the Residual group of the Demon Lord. Could it be that the [Authority of the Host Master]……”

“No! These felons are ignoring the rules of Gift Games and had launched a direct assault! And they are the epitome of an unlawful organization!”

Anger was evident in Kuro Usagi’s reply. Gift Games were one of the few rules that existed within Little Garden that granted lots of freedom. The violent acts that did not conform to such a rule would surely cause her to be boiling in rage within her heart.

Just as they dodged another slash from the huge sword, they heard

Asuka's voice coming from behind.

"Kasukabe-san! Kuro Usagi! Are you guys fine?!"

"No problem on our end!"[65]

Kuro Usagi opened her mouth to reply and Asuka nodded to acknowledge.

Asuka then raised her Gift Card as she intended to summon Deen. Only to be stopped by a flustered Kuro Usagi.

"Wait……Please wait a moment, Asuka-san! If Deen and the Titans started to fight within the Underground City, the whole city would definitely be flattened!"

"Then what should I do?"

"Please head above ground with Yō-san! There's more of the Titan tribe attacking outside! Please leave the city to Kuro Usagi!"

Kuro Usagi raised her Vajra that shot out a thousand arcs of lightning just as she ended her words.

The masked Titan wasn't able to dodge the counterattack and howled as it crashed to the floor.

However, in the next moment, three other titans leapt down from above.

"Gahouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhou----!"

Boom! The titans who had leapt down had thrown a chain towards Kuro Usagi in an attempt to restrict her movements. However, Kuro Usagi had a comparable leg power to Izayoi's own.

Weaving through the gap of the chain thrown at her original position, she leapt in front of the Titan clan and let out a volley of lightning from her [Mock Divinity. Vajra] to strike them down.

"Rest assured! This level of opponents will never be a match to Kuro Usagi, no matter how many they may bring! Both of you, please help support the others outside!"

"I……I got it!"

Asuka shouted her consent as Yō whipped up a whirlwind that flew

Asuka to the outside. At the moment before she flew herself to the surface, Yō who took a glance below and spotted the destroyed dormitory.

“…..Wu!”

A sense of panic caused Yō’s chest to feel tight. Judging by the extent of destruction, the headphones shouldn’t be able to remain intact without a scratch. Once the headphones are damaged, it would be more difficult for her to prove her innocence.

If the misunderstanding were to be unsolvable, the happy times they had up till now would burst like a soap bubble---

“Kasukabe-san! Go to the surface!”

“Nn……Okay!”

Asuka’s voice pulled Yō’s mind back to reality and they left the Underground City together to the surface.

As their field of vision widened, the battle torn situation was painted before their very eyes.

The echoes of bronze weapons clamoring against each other resounded across the plains and the river banks.

The curtains of the night sky were illuminated by flames that blossomed sporadically.

The deafening explosions from the fire arrows that were shot at each other were reflected by a barrier created with whirlwinds.

[Underwood]’s lower regions[66] were also embroiled in battles that made use of the condensed miracles—[Gifts].

“The……The situation seems to be worse than my imagination!”

Though the Titan tribe had at most two hundred or so on their side, but their opponents could only block one with 10 of their own. Facing a Titan invader, it required many Beastmen and Eudemons to attack together to successfully stop the advance of the opponent.

Even though the situation was as described above, the numbers were in [Underwood] residents favor and they should still be in an advantageous position. However, the chaotic battle field was filled with many differing views.

“Those people over at the Great Tree! Put out the lights! These guys are bad at night vision!”

“Cannot! There’re also [Two Wing] members who are bad at night vision!”

“Who cares about that! We would only be giving our opponents the upper hand if we continue like this!”

“We have to find the sentry who should have alerted us to this invasion and see if he really did do his job!”

The chaos was like a contagious disease that rapidly spread through the ranks of the defenders. The situation was simply out of control. The residents of [Underwood] were just a messy crowd that were engaged in their individual battles.

[No. We should focus on the situation at hand now!]

Yō cut off her train of thoughts to change her perspective. Since the situation was this bad, there’s no time for her to continue dwelling on other problems.

“Asuka, let’s find Sala to control the situation first……”

“I think that would be impossible.”

Asuka immediately replied. Looking to the direction that Asuka pointed, Yō spotted a bright and fiery figure in the night sky.

It was Sala who was flying in the skies with her Flaming Wings and there were three other Titan clan members that were pursuing relentlessly.

Though the three of them on first glance seemed smaller than the other Titans, but besides the masks that all the Titans wore they had a golden crown adorning their heads, sceptres[67] or a long staff as part of their accessories, distinctly marking them as different from the other Titans in terms of their imposing presence.

“Those three who are currently in battle with Sala should be the main force of the invaders. If we were to enter the fray and upset the balance, there’s no telling that it would be more good than harm. For now, let’s just go confirm the chaotic battle situation below before all else.”

“I got it. How do we do that?”

Caught by Yō’s question, Asuka thought for a moment while observing the defense line of the City.

“……Can’t let them invade into the City… Just place me down at the spot that is about to be breached.”

“You sure?”

“Nn. I will summon Deen on my way down to create a diversion and opening in the enemies and use that moment of surprise to launch my attack.”

“Okay. I will leave it to you.”

Asuka’s red formal dress fluttered as she descended into the battlefield and she took out her Gift card while shouting amidst the clamors of battle:

“Come to me! Deen!”

Following Asuka’s summons, a circular magic array that had no markings on it appeared in the skies.

And from the middle of the circular array, a huge armored red steel doll of a height similar to the Titans appeared and fell towards the ground.

The impact of the collision caused the ground to shudder and form a huge crater at its feet.

“---DEEEEEEEEEeeeeEEEEEEEN!”

The reverberation of the roar echoed in the Moon lit night.

The figure caused the Titan tribe, Gryphons and the other beastmen to quake in fear.

Due to the red Steel doll’s sudden appearance, the battle was ceased for a moment as they couldn’t identify which side it belonged to. Grabbing that chance, Asuka shouted her orders.

“Stun them with your roar! And beat your opponents flat!”

“DEEEEEEEEEeeeeEEEEEEEN!”

Deen stomped through the ground and began its charge. Grabbing the masked heads of two Titans within its reach, it smashed the back of their skulls together.

The warriors of the Titan tribe couldn't help but give a roar in anger.

"Gahouhouhouhouhouhou---!"

The titans tried to escape the grasp of the Steel arms, but Deen's unnatural power wasn't about to be moved by such an effort. Not releasing its hold on the titans in its right and left hands, it proceeded to smash them together repeatedly to the point where its opponents have lost consciousness.

And with that, Deen raised an unconscious titan.

"Toss him out!"

"DEEEEEEEEEeeeeEEEEEEEN!"

Under Asuka's command, Deen tossed the titan in one of its hand at another titan.

The titan must have been too stunned to register what was happening. It would seem that they had never thought of the possibility that their comrade could be tossed into the air with arms and legs flailing like he were dancing in mid-air and collide right into his own chest.

The two Titans who were tangled with each other seemed to have become a tumbler[68] as they rolled and bounced all the way to the middle of the large river.

Witnessing the great battle from the air, Yō had forgotten to provide assistance and merely gaped in a daze.

"Deen's……really impressive!"

Yō had heard of how Deen made a quick job out of the Demon Lord cronies previously and had predicted a certain amount of battle strength that it needed to do that.

But the actual ability had far exceeded her imagination. The warriors of the Titan tribe didn't stand a chance against the Red Steel doll that was at its full power. And it had already put down

three of the Titan tribe within moments.

The heroic performance gave a boost to the spirit of the [Underwood] defenders.

Judging it to be a victorious turning point, a person in the Great Tree unfurled the banner of the [Draco Greif] Alliance and lit torches to brighten it up.

Sala also began to speed up her wrestling with the three Titans and swung her red hair that seemed to burn with crimson flames back as she shouted:

“If you let your guests protect the [Host], this would be our lifelong embarrassment! All members of the [Draco Greif] Alliance! Stand strong and hold your respective stations and change the tide!”

Roars of the emboldened warriors erupted in the battlefield as they replied to her chiding with much fervor. The various Communities that had returned to their orderly thoughts started to gather in their formations under the Flag and started to resume their respective missions.

[One Horn] and [Five Claws] moved forth to the frontlines and roared as they attacked the invaders.

[Two Wings] and [Four Footed] pulled the two wheeled war chariots as they provided support.

[Three Tails] and [Six Scars] were in charge of stretchering the injured away from the frontlines and providing item support.[69]

Facing the [Draco Greif] members that were getting more organized in their attacks, the Titan tribe was slowly being pushed back and had started to retreat as well.

Yō who was observing the battle situation had thought that the result was already clear by then. But---

In that moment, the sound of a stringed instrument being played could be heard from the field.

“……Huh?”

Yō couldn't react in time as a dense fog began to cover the surroundings. The battlefield below had also been shrouded by the

fog.

The strange fog had even appeared in front of Yō's eyes when she was about a thousand meters above ground.

And that made the sense of sight useless.

"How did it suddenly……"

"Oh no!"

Yō suddenly jerked her head down to look below.

The three Titans that had originally targeted Sala were now targeting Asuka and Deen as they launched their attacks. And what made things worse was the fact that the other Titan tribe members had thrown lots of chains around Deen's body, causing it to be slower in its actions.

If Deen's movements were entirely locked down, Asuka would become defenseless.

"Asuka---!"

Yō wrapped herself with whirlwinds as she descended rapidly. Placing all her energy to increase her speed to the maximum Yō then assessed the information stored within the [Genome Tree] to increase her mass to the heaviest recorded mass of an animal that she had befriended.

Bringing her full force into the strike that had created lots of shockwaves in her descent…

"Gahouhouhouhouhouhou---!"

However, she was swept aside by the huge arm that collided into her side.

"……WHAT?!"

It was just as simple a gesture as swatting a fly.

The crowned and masked Titan had easily deflected the strike that Yō had pumped all her energy into.

Yō managed to pull herself into a defensive position to protect herself, albeit with much difficulty and she collided with the surface

of the big river, skipping along the surface before landing on the other side of the bank. Due to her use of wind to cushion her impacts, she hadn't sustained any serious injuries. If it were to be land that she first smashed into, there's no telling how serious an injury she might have sustained.

Moreover, the reason why she was able to take on that attack without injuries was due to the fact that Yō's body was strengthened beyond that of a normal human.

[If Asuka were to receive such an attack……]

Surely---her slender body would be beaten to pulp.

Yō shook her head to rid herself of that worst possible scenario.

Whipping up a whirlwind to start her flight, Yō tried to rush back to Asuka's side as fast as she could.

Though Yō had the sight of an eagle, but visibility on the ground was too poor with everything shrouded in dense fog. Even while flying close to the ground at her maximum speed, she could only rely on her ears that picked up sharp sounds of metals clashing and the roars of the Titan tribe. In addition to the poor sight, she was also getting confused by the smells and it was clear that this was a Gift used by the invaders.

[If it's like this……]

Yō suddenly ascended rapidly and stopped in mid-air.

Since the fog is the result of a Gift's power, we can only use the power of a Gift to counter it.

Spreading her arms, Yō started to collect all the winds into her palms.

[Though I've not tried any tricks other than flight……but I'm sure I can do it---!]

No. It must succeed no matter what.

If she couldn't succeed, Asuka's life would be in danger.

"Da…Damn it……Disperse them all---!"

The tornado that moved along the water level of the river gave a

rumbling roar as it started to move forth. And it wasn't long after that it started to suck up the fog along the funnel and up into the sky.

Though the thought was sound, the effectiveness was lacking and the dense fog showed no signs of dissipating. Yō had thought that her efforts had all been for naught when her ears picked up the roars of Eudemons that have witnessed her actions.

"---GEYAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Seeming to respond to Yō, the battlefield was suddenly filled with a large amount of whirlwinds. Though the roars of the Eudemons were unable to be understood by people who lacked the capacity to speak in their language, but they were all understandable to Yō's ears.

[It's Gry and his comrades……]

Thanking him in her heart, Yō took the chance to sprint forward as the fog was dissipating.

Just as she was praying hard to make it in time when she reached the battlefield---

She found that Asuka was still fine, causing Yō to feel as though she had worked for nothing.

"Asuka!"

"Ka……Kasukabe-san……Ya!"

Yō who felt so relieved that she forgot to stop her speed, knocked into Asuka and they fell to the ground. Though it was lucky that Asuka was on the floor and not on Deen's shoulder that a tragedy did not happen, but she still couldn't avoid falling to the ground on her butt.

"This's great! To be able to get through that kind of situation without a scratch. You really are great, Asuka!"

"Though I would really like to answer that with a [Of course, do you really need to ask me that?], but in reality, it wasn't me who defeated the enemies."

"Eh?"

"……Just look around you and you will understand."

Under the urging of Asuka's solemn voice, Yō looked around to confirm the situation.

The fog was dissipating and the shadow of a human figure was becoming more visible. As for the Titan tribe---

"---How is it possible……"

When the fog had dissipated, she noted that the Titan tribe---had been annihilated.

They had been gutted by a sharp blade that cleanly slit open their skulls, necks, hearts and none had been allowed to become anything other than corpses on the ground. The main force of the invaders should also be amongst the dead, the trio that had worn crowns and held accessories like the sceptres.

……Yō was sure that she had arrived beside Asuka's side within a minute.

But the Titan tribe on these parts of the battle field had all been wiped out with the same type of technique.

"Could it be……all the Titan tribe was…….by one person……who in the world is it?"

This reality was a great shock to Yō as she drew a sharp intake of breath.

To be able to wipe out the Titan Tribe in such a short period of time. That was surely an act that far exceeded one's imagination.

Amongst the people that Yō knew of, only one could have managed this monster like feat---

"---You aren't hurt, right?"

"Eh…… Eh?'

Yō immediately came to her senses. Though she had heightened her alertness due to the sudden voice, she immediately dismissed it in the next moment. This was definitely not because of her willingness to dismiss it.

But it was because Yō could understand with just one look---Though

the owner of the voice wasn't a beast man, neither was she an Eudemon nor a Lesser Dragon.

It was she, this woman who had killed all of the Titan Tribe.

"……"

The other party had a black hair ornament that tied back her beautiful pure white hair.

The white formal dress that seems to bring out a sense of quiet prudence on her was also covered by an exquisitely decorated silvery white armor.

A black and white Masquerade half-mask[70] covered the upper half of her facial features.

Seeming like a figure that's only made out of the two colors of white and black, she was now totally drenched in the splatter of Titan's blood.

"……You were the one who beat the Titans?"

"……"

The masked lady only glanced at the both of them to ascertain their safety with her eyes without giving a reply. Following that, she then turned away from Yō and Asuka as she left the scene with the only parts not covered in blood being that of her black hairpin and the swaying long ponytail that was tied by it.

Yō watched her back view as she was stumped for words, whereas Asuka propped herself up and said bitterly:

"That lady ……is very strong."

Even for Asuka who had much pride to admit that so simply without any conditions, there wasn't a need to know that the other had held an impressive amount of power that simply caused others to feel overwhelmed. And there was no telling that they might be meeting her as an opponent in the Harvest Festival Games. Thinking about that, the both of them simply couldn't feel pure joy about being able to pull through safely.

Just when they were bending their heads gloomily, the bell to

inform all about the end of the battle started to toll.

The dense fog that once covered the starry skies of [Underwood] had also been dissipated by the efforts of Yō and the other Eudemons.

Lifting her gaze to the starry skies, Yō straightened her back as she inhaled a refreshing breath of fresh air that came from the river, while she looked at the full moon that was a day past it's fullest--- [71]

"---Ah."

Yō remembered the headphones that she had left in the dormitory and a sudden irksome chill seemed to pass through her shoulder blades. In cold sweat and whipping up a gust of whirlwind, Yō rushed back towards the dormitory.

Chapter 7

Part 1

As Leticia listened to Izayoi's recount, she felt a chill spreading across her body.

Her mind was wholeheartedly focused, completely wholeheartedly focused on praying for a certain wish.

If only that would change the fact.

If only that was enough to change the trajectory of the stars.

She had already prepared herself to hold the determination to pray for a Million Billion times.

---I hope it's a mistake

---I hope it's the wrong person.

---Please, please let it be a different person who has the same name by coincidence.

Otherwise ……There would be a girl that has worked hard since three years ago till now without any way to get anything in return.

Part 2

By the time Izayoi finished nine out of ten parts of the stack, it had already started pouring outside.

Originally thinking that it would be a short shower, he didn't notice that the intensity had changed to be such a fast and heavy downpour.

The wind that blew against the loose window panes led to a grating sound and caused the rain drops to deviate horizontally to hit upon the glass of the window.

Izayoi began talking to himself while gazing at the courtyard that was getting direct irrigation from the heavy downpour.

"……Come to think of it, the day that Canaria and I met had also been of a similar downpour."

Izayoi gave a throaty laugh as he reminisced that incident in the past.

Izayoi wasn't the kind that would hate the sound of the raindrops hitting on the window pane and he had always been tolerant with the different sounds of water hitting upon different surfaces. Hence he decided to lean at the side of the window to continue dissecting the contents of the 'will and last testament' with the sound of raindrops splashing as the background sounds.

[That Stupid Mum……To actually leave such a thick stack of will behind and for the contents to be almost complete with memories! I don't care even if she needs to spin a lie or two but she really doesn't care about grabbing the reader's interest?]

Izayoi shook his head in disapproval.

The contents of Canaria's will was really just her memories that was no different from writing an autobiography.

From the violent stormy day that they had met to the experiences they had when she brought Izayoi to tour the world.

They had gone to each of the World's Top 3 Biggest Waterfalls to challenge the urban legends of [Demons hiding within the

Waterfall].

And had doubted whether the Earth was round? Or just a flat surface that extends outwards that is called a world? Hence using their own boat to confirm with their voyage.

The memories between them was what almost took up 600 pages.

……To tell the feeling that this evokes in a blunt manner, you could say that Canaria was definitely the kind of parent who seriously doted on their children.

[……Forget it. I guess it's still okay since I really did have fun back then.]

The rain had intensified. Perhaps it was the side effect of having good weather for the past few days in a row, the downpour didn't seem to show signs of slackening any time soon. Izayoi was watching the scene outside the window when he realized that one particular memory hadn't been penned down.

[That's right……The time when we went to see a battlefield. That was totally not mentioned by her.]

Izayoi touched the condensation that had formed on the window as he smiled wryly.

As long as it's a location that Izayoi wanted to go, Canaria would really bring him there.

Just like his wish to visit the beautiful waterside views, Canaria had brought him to see the Top 3 World Biggest Waterfalls and the City of Water.[72]

Wanting to see a magnificent scenery, be it Mount Kilimanjaro, Everest, Mount Fuji or other places, Canaria will always bring him along.

As for the one time that Izayoi had asked to see a battlefield--- Canaria had brought him to the most disconsolate place of all to see it with his own two eyes.

At the end of that journey, Canaria had informed Izayoi that she would never bring Izayoi to such a place ever again.

If Izayoi wanted to see a battlefield, he would have to depend on

his own two feet and determination. And that was the first time that Canaria had left him behind in a huff. Hence Izayoi had also sworn not to step onto a battlefield as long as Canaria still breathed.

……That was the level of trust that they shared between the both of them. Izayoi who had only realized that now, couldn't help but smile wryly.

[……]

The seven years that he had spent together with Canaria when compared to the ten years before that, the difference between the fulfillments felt in the two lives didn't even need to be compared.

That was a period that Izayoi could proudly thrust out his chest and say the words [My days were enjoyable] to purely describe the time he spent.

However, even if it were like this……If you were to ask whether the gap in Izayoi's heart have been filled or not? The answer would be a no.

Izayoi had challenged the demon that rested within Iguazu Falls[73] and had returned safely to tell the tale, which was an achievement of Humankind.

---However, the demon in question did not exist.

At the young age of 10 years old, he had walked through the whole of Mount Kilimanjaro which had been said to be inhabited by a god. And the view of the mountain he saw was truly mysterious.

---But, the god did not exist too.

Was the Earth really round? The world wasn't extending out like a plane? Izayoi had completely uncovered the mysteries of the seven seas.

---However, that was already a truth that was known.

After experiencing much in his journeys, Izayoi had finally understood.

The world greatest wonder that existed was none other than Izayoi himself.

---After those, Izayoi's strangeness and thirst for excitement began to tone down to a solemnness. And after he was given the resting place of CANARIA foster home, Izayoi never committed any serious law breaking stuff.

To put it simply, normal humans were a type of living thing that could easily be beaten or shot dead.

And that fact became the shackles around Izayoi's inner self, in addition to his conscience and common sense.

If Izayoi wanted to continue living within the human society, he would have to be able to fit in with the standards of others.

---[The Heavens cannot create another that stands above me].

That was not a metaphor. Izayoi knew it to be just purely an uninteresting fact.

After Canaria had passed on, the smile that Izayoi had left was one that merely mocked the boring world that he lived in.

[……I guess I should continue to finish up the rest.]

If he were to start going into philosophy, he would really be moving into the stage of old age, Izayoi had that thought as he walked back to the table.

And there actually was sixty more pages. That really was seriously infuriating.

Out of irritation, I might as well just read through it really carefully down to every last word and line to find for any grammatical or spelling errors! Izayoi who had that thought in mind caught sight on the last line on the other side of the page he was holding.

"---Ah, right. That's right. I almost forgot. You would be wearing that digital watch today as well right? Then, I guess the next time you look at your watch, the date and time will be 5/5 15:49 48.27 seconds."

"What?"

Izayoi couldn't help but exclaim to himself as he looked at his watch out of reflex.

The numbers shown on his digital watch were 5/5 15:49 48.27 seconds.

"……Oh? What's this?"

Izayoi's voice was mixed with much joy.

Needless to say, the pages before him were part of the last testament and will. Moreover, Izayoi hadn't told a soul of his plan to come today. In fact, he had just chosen it to be today just because he had felt like it.

To be able to accurately predict Izayoi's actions to the very second, that wasn't a normal thing that could be accomplished.

"Ha! What's that! To actually leave such an interesting trick behind. Such a Itsuki! I can't seem to figure out the trick behind it too! That smelly hag!"

Though he was cursing under his breath, Izayoi was actually very excited and this was a feeling that he had long awaited for.

---That's right. This should be the way.

Having made a contract with me, the will of the woman who promised to let me play happily for the rest of my life, shouldn't be only writing about her memories and let it end like that.

Izayoi was sure that the remaining sixty pages contained the last surprise Canaria had for him as he continued to read.

"Haven't I said it before, not to call me a smelly Obaa-san, right?"

"---Huh---!"

Izayoi stood up with gusto. And started to observe his surroundings, checking to make sure that there wasn't any spying video camera or other suspicious devices.

Of course, he did not find any of those. Talking about the suspicious items in the room, it should only be that man in a tailcoat who hid in that corner.

Izayoi tucked away his smile when he returned to his wits. The introduction in these two pages were really strange and seemed as though they were written only after hearing of Izayoi's own words to himself.

"Ha……This sure is interesting! As expected of the last surprise that Canaria constructed, it sure is worthy of my time!"

Izayoi controlled the excited heartbeat of his as he made sure of the handwriting of the will first.

However, that was undoubtedly Canaria's very own handwriting.

……has it been written by her under the condition of having foretold the future before her death? Although that was a very good hypothesis, it was unfortunate that Izayoi had already graduated from his imagination five years ago. So though he might be surprised, he still continued to read the will.

"Okay, I guess you should already have roughly guessed it. This is my final game. The [Host] is the 'me who doesn't exist', the opponent is also the 'me who doesn't exist', the challenge requirement is also me. Hence, there's only one winning condition for Izayoi-chan! That would be to find the non-existent 'me' and 'you' and hand it over to the entrance---!]

Swish! In the situation that had no sign of a forewarning, the entire will and last testament stack began to flutter upwards and around the room before moving out to land at various places of CANARIA foster home.

The roof, the courtyard, the corridors, the reception area, the rooms and Guest room.

The will had even headed towards a dozen other places. The unnatural phenomenon of the will caused Izayoi to be momentarily dazed, but at this moment, a piece of the will lightly fluttered to his outstretched hand. And the contents caused him to immediately be taken aback when he managed to see it clearly.

"In addition, if you're still unable to figure it out by 1800hrs---I will be bringing everyone with me as my prize."

"……What?!"

Izayoi felt a very bad omen. Knowing her more than anyone else,

Canaria would never write a false rule when she was the game's [Host]. Immediately rushing out of the room, Izayoi headed to the reception area at the entrance.

He then went to inspect Homura's and Suzuka's rooms and likewise, confirmed all the other rooms. However, no matter where he went, it was always the same.

There was no one around.

Izayoi who was shocked by the development to this point, naturally checked the time.

The current time was 16:00.

And that was also the time that everyone within CANARIA foster home had disappeared.

Part 3

---[Underwood Underground City], in front of the wreckage that was the Dormitory.

After fighting off the invasion of the Titan tribe, Yō made a beeline to the area before the dormitory. Though it was supported with the help of a tree root, the interior was still a normal dormitory.

In the case where a hole is made in the floorings, it would naturally collapse; if the pillar was broken into two, the structure will also be demolished.

Needless to say, the interior that was smashed through by the thick strong arm of the Titan had naturally formed a pile of rubble that seem to break through the flat ground surface.

And Yō was using the wind to blow away the pieces of rubble in search for Izayoi's headphones.

[Please let it be safe……If the headphones get spoilt……]

Yō continued to pray with her grieving heart. Her heart was now in a complete turmoil with the many incidences that kept coming one after another.

Amongst all the things that weighed on her heart, the one that gave the most significant pressure was---

[Even after coming to the South Side……I've… still been unable to make any progress!]

When it was she who held the strong determination from the start.

And it was through the forfeiting of her friend's rights that allowed her to make the journey.

Sure. She did participate in the battle as well. But it had left her with a bad aftertaste of defeat at the most crucial and hapless moment. She felt that she would lose her current home if the headphones were to be damaged as well.

The repeated strong and fervent prayers went unanswered as the headphones were found under a pile of rubble……

"……AH……"

It was already broken and looking like a broken corpse that if one tried hard enough, a flame logo could be made out from its remains.

If it were only a crack on the outer surface, there might still be a chance that it can be repaired through the miracles of Little Garden.

However, the headphones were too far gone. Smashed into bits. So much so that Yō had given up thoughts of repairing it on the first glance. Unmercifully giving up on the pieces of wrecked remains.

[What can I do now……Because of these headphones that Izayoi treasures so much……]

That's right. These were a pair of headphones that could even cause Izayoi to put aside his original eagerness to participate in the Harvest Festival no matter the costs, just to continue searching for his treasured item. Just to search for it, Izayoi had chosen to stay at the Community Grounds and asked me to replace him to come here and encouraged me to work hard ……and in the end……if this treasure were to be identified as something that I stole…… all the important things that I've gained after arriving in Little Garden will be wrecked.

"……Kasukabe-san? What's wrong?"

Yō's body gave a small jump. The footsteps of her friend coming ever closer, now seemed to be the sound of the Death Reaper walking closer. Her heart rate was beating so fast and violently, it was almost to the point of exploding.

"Ka….Kasukabe-san? Your……Your face seems very pale! Are you all right?"

"A……Asuka……"

Cradling the flame logo in her hands, Yō stood up unsteadily.

Just when Kasukabe's senses were to be overtaken by the weak thoughts of [Make a run for it]---a broken off tree root of the Great Tree came falling towards her head.

Part 4

---[Underwood] Harvest Festival Headquarters.

Kuro Usagi and Jin had been requested to meet up with Sala after the invasion attempt on Underwood. During the invasion of the Titans, Jin who had already been asked for and had been at the Headquarters was hidden away in the interior of the Great Tree.

Though he was really embarrassed about himself being unable to join in the battle, he knew that it wasn't the time to be worried about that sort of thing currently.

Jin and the [Will-O'-Wisp] members who were summoned to the Headquarters like the [No Name], posed their question to Sala.

"Sala-sama, what's happening now? Wasn't the Demon Lord that invaded [Underwood] 10 years ago already destroyed? "

Hearing Jin's question, Sala leaned back on her chair and tilted her chin upwards in a backward stretch with her head facing the ceiling.

"……Sorry. I'd actually thought of telling you of the details tonight. But I really didn't expect those guys to act up that fast. In fact, I have another reason for inviting your Communities to come to [Underwood] ……Would you be willing to hear me out?"

"Yes."

"Yahoho……Nn. If it is just hearing you out, there's no need for us to decline."

Jin had given his reply immediately while Jack smiled in an evasive manner.

Sala leaned her body forward as she started her explanation.

"I guess you would have heard that [Underwood] was previously attacked by a Demon Lord right?"

"Yes. I heard that it was something that happened ten years back."

"That's right. Though we managed to defeat the Demon Lord

successfully, we were left with serious wounds. Moreover, the Remnant Group of the Demon Lord seems bent on getting their revenge on [Underwood].”

“……the Remnant Group that you have mentioned were the Titan tribe earlier?”

“That’s right. However, it might not be only the Titan tribe. Having inspected the grounds before this, the situation of the surroundings were very strange as I had feared. Even those Perytons who are the lead Man killers of the Eudemons have also started to gather. To be unresponsive to the intimidation of the Gryphons, it could very well be a certain type of spell that controls them.”

“I see……But the Titan tribe of before was from which tribe? Kuro Usagi seems to have no recollection of seeing that kind of mask.”

Sala responded with a “Nn” before lapsing into a short silence. Seemingly finding trouble with expressing her thoughts into words, she continued albeit slowly:

“Those remnants of the Demon Lord group ……are the descendants of the Titans who have fled into Little Garden and are of mixed ancestry.“

“So that’s how it is.” Kuro Usagi nodded her head.

“Many of the titan tribes in Little Garden are the remnant armies running from the other worlds after losing their battles. One of the most significant would be the Fomorians of the Celtic Myths, there are even those that come from the Nordic lands.[74] And since they have had the experience of suffering defeat and escaping, their characters are much more peaceful now, not thirsting for battle but a tribe that specializes in crafting……However, there was a sub-faction that got their hands on a Grimoire called ＜The Book of Invasions＞ fifty years ago and started to use the [Authority of a Host Master] to dominate the Titan tribe. And that was the origin of it all.”

Kuro Usagi ‘s rabbit ears drooped down seemingly in thought.

“＜The Book of Invasions＞? Was the game called ‘Labor Gabala’?”[75]

“Do you know what it’s about?”

“Yes. Though I can’t really say that I know it fully but I’ve previously heard of its information briefly. I heard that this [Authority of Host Master] was obtained from a different book called ＜Erin Grimoire＞[76] and it can forcefully start up a Game that places the land as the bet.”

“That’s right. Amongst all of the [Authority of Host Master]s, this could be said to be a very normal ability. And it was with that ability that these guys were able to slowly expand and develop their Community to become stronger.”

---However, the Demon Lord group was defeated in the battle.

The titan tribes had then returned to a group of disorganized mob of the losing army.

And since Sala had described them to be a peaceful race, then why would they continue their attacks on [Underwood]?

At this moment, Sala stood up from her chair and rolled up the Alliance flag that hung on the wall.

Taking a stone that was about the size of a human skull from the secret treasury behind the flag, she presented it before the others.

“This ‘eye’ is their target.”

“…… ‘eye’? You mean that piece of rock?”

“Nn. Though it is currently sealed……but if it were to be unsealed, it is said to be able to wipe out a hundred Divine Spirits within a breath.”

The VIP room was suddenly filled with the sound of the others drawing their breaths loudly.

Kuro Usagi and the others had just fought with Demon Lords of the Divine spirit levels a month ago and they understood the might of a Divine spirit. However, Sala was now holding an item that was said to hold a power which could easily wipe out a hundred of those with Divine Spirit level. Kuro Usagi felt the chills that ran down her spine as she asked gingerly:

“What in the world is that Gift?”

“…… This is ‘The Death Eye of Balor’.”

Peng![77] Jin and Kuro Usagi stood up in shock.

“Ba…Ba…Balor’s Death Eye!”

“You…You are joking right?! Talking about [The Death Eye of Balor], it’s the strongest and scariest of all Death eyes in the Celtic myths! It’s a Demon Lord eye that can kill just by one look of the Gift!”

Kuro Usagi’s face had turned pale and her gestures were much more exaggerated. However, seeing how brutal that item was, her reaction was very much a normal one that one would have expected.

---[The Death Eye of Balor][78] is a Godly Eye Gift that can confer death upon others.

It could also be traced back to the Celtic Myths of fifth Century BC, the Mystic Eye that was recorded to be owned by King Balor of the Titan race. Legend had it that if the eye is open, It would shine as bright as the Sun and confer death at the same time.

If wind was the medium that conferred death for the [Black Death Demon Lord]---

Then, the magical eye [The Death Eye of Balor] that was accompanied with light would be able to forcefully confer death.

“But [The Death Eye of Balor] should have vanished together with Balor’s death. Why would it still be……”

“There isn’t anything strange about this. After some research, I learnt that the Celtic gods are mostly those that have acquired Divine spirits. In other words, it also means that they have built up spirit levels that would allow them to rise to the level of Divine Spirits. And since it is so, it wouldn’t be too surprising to see a day when a second Balor appears.”

---It was as Sala said. By accumulating accomplishments, it was true that one could acquire the amount needed to rise to a Divine spirit level.

A very good example would be [Black Death Demon Lord].

Besides the 80 million souls, she had also absorbed the respect and fear caused by the [Piper of Hamelin], and rose to the Divine Spirit

level with that.

The ascension to a Divine Spirit is by overcoming the test to [accumulate more than a certain number of devotees] to receive that Gift.

“Nu…Now that you mention it, it’s true ……More than half of the Celtic gods were able to obtain their devotees from their country’s might. It’s said that the reason behind it is due to the belief of the Druid kind who possess their own power, devoting themselves to the idolizing of their ancestors and nature as the mainstream belief……”

“That’s right. As long as there is a large congregation of beliefs from Mankind, one will become a god. The Celtic myths are a clear example of that. And precisely because it is in Little Garden, the number of Titans who happen to awaken to [The Death Eye of Balor] isn’t that rare. Another way to explain it would be the effect of <The Book of Invasion> leading to the replications.”

As her words ended, Sala shifted her gaze down.

Looking upon the eye that was imbued with the power of a Demon Lord.

“I guess those guys would want to retrieve this godly eye even if they have to use unscrupulous means. Though its true power cannot be released without a suitable element affinity, it’s still a very strong Gift. I think they will continue to use the chance when we are busy hosting the Harvest Festival and are unable to divert our attentions to launch their next attack.”

“Yahoho……So, you mean for us to provide support and protect the City from being destroyed?”

Jack and Ayesha didn’t even bother to hide their disgusted expressions. Though the both of them might possess combat abilities, their Community [Will-O'-Wisp] wasn’t oriented towards combat for no matter how you see them, they are still a Community that focused on Crafting.

If it were similar to the previous situation where they were forcefully dragged in, that would have been a different matter. But to be on the side that initiates the act of war would be pushing their motto a little too far off.

Swaying her twintails, Ayesha's expression was troubled.

"It's true that Willa Onee-san is strong, but her character is totally unsuitable for combat. Hence, unless there's a very special situation that crops up, she wouldn't even be willing to participate in normal Gift Games. Moreover for this kind of matter, shouldn't it be the correct procedure to first find the [Floor Master] to discuss? The other party is a Community that doesn't even follow the rules of Gift Games and ignore the laws completely isn't it?"

Hearing Ayesha's accusation, Sala continued to keep her silence for the blame wasn't wrong.

Regarding the punishments that are supposed to be imposed on the criminals who broke the law this time, it's originally the task of the [Floor Master]. Needless to say, those guys were an unlawful group that didn't even possess the [Authority of Host Master]. Even if it were a one-sided massacre towards them, they would have no right to voice their protest.

However, Sala only showed a very troubled gaze as she shook her head.

"Unfortunately……There's no [Floor Master] for South Side currently."

"……what?"

"This was something that happened a month ago, around the time that [Black Death Demon Lord] had appeared. A Demon Lord who lived in 7000000 Outer Gate had beaten the [Floor Master] and his safety and or whereabouts are currently unknown. And I heard that the real identity of the Demon Lord is also a mystery."

"WHAT?!"

The surprising revelation caused Ayesha to gape and be tongue tied. The others were also similar. All of them didn't expect the position of [Floor Master] to be in a state of vacancy.

Sala closed her eyes and lifted her head as she started on the details of the situation in South Side.

"The Titans had started becoming active since that incident. My comrades of [One Horn]---the herd of unicorns who were supposed to migrate over to [Underwood] had also been attacked by the

Titans and suffered serious casualties that almost wiped them out. We haven't been able to get in contact since."

"How…How can it be……"

Kuro Usagi's face was pale. If this were the case, the unicorn that she met before near the Tritonis Waterfall would be very unlikely to remain safe.

"I'm waiting to ask Shiroyasha-sama to take on the task of my position and hopefully choose the new [Floor Master] for South Side as well. However, it isn't an easy task for any Community to take on the position as [Floor Master] for they would be in charge of maintaining the peace of the region. Hence Shiroyasha-sama had suggested……forming the Alliance of [Draco Greif] to rise up to the five digit level before she can appoint us as the [Floor Master]."

Kuro Usagi and Jin drew their breaths sharply as they realized what it all meant.

"Then……Then this Harvest Festival is the test for [Draco Greif] Alliance to see if it possess the qualifications to rise up to the five digit level and to take on the responsibility of [Floor Master] through the use of Games?"

"That's right. As long as we succeed in becoming a [Floor Master], we would be able to obtain the [Authority of Host Master] and a stronger Gift. To destroy the Titan tribe for good, we can only hope to rely on a Gift Game hosted with the [Authority of Host Master] to declare war on them. For the sake of the South Side, we must pull through the hosting of the Harvest Festival no matter what."

Sala announced it with her resolute determination. Hearing the truth for the first time, the others were momentarily speechless but at the same time, Kuro Usagi could understand the feeling.

---The [Draco Greif] Alliance was an Alliance that ranked within the top few in terms of the lower levels and in influence.

Even in the far off Outer Gates where the [No Name] were at, there's also a branch of [Six Scars]. Similar to their scale in influence, they too have a long history of their activities.

For such an Alliance with a well-known name, the responsibility of the representative just happens to be held by the newcomer, Sala Doltrake. Even if the residents of South Side were very open and

friendly, it would be unthinkable for them to simply give up the position of the representative that was as significant as the leader of the herd. Especially for those Eudemons who are very territorial in nature, it would hold much more significance for them.

However, Sala was originally the successor of [Salamandra]'s [Floor Master].

It may have been due to the valuing of her experience in that region that they nominated her to the position of representative in a short span of three years.

[Sala-sama should have been learning the job scope of the [Floor Master] from her father's side. Considering the future of the [Draco Greif] Alliance, it would make sense to nominate her as the representative.]

Kuro Usagi might not be too clear on the matters surrounding Sala. But [Salamandra] was a Community that was once in Alliance with them. And precisely because Sala was the successor of [Salamandra], she had heard of some of the rumors about her being a very capable and talented person. There were even those rumors that speculated on Sala being able to bring [Salamandra] to greater heights if she were to inherit the DragonKing of the Stars and Seas' Horn.

However, Sala herself was now touching her red hair that seemed to be a habit when she's troubled and was wearing a wry smile on her face.

"Abandoning my position as the successor to the [Floor Master], the current me in [Draco Greif] Alliance currently plans to become the [Floor Master] for South Side… I guess that will look as quite a joke to all…However, it isn't the time for me to pick on such details now. For the sake of maintaining the peace of the South Side, would your Communities please lend us your strength?"

"Though you might say like this……"

Even after knowing the whole story, Jack was still quite reluctant.

However, Sala wasn't going to give up as well. Placing [The Death Eye of Balor] within her palm, she spoke up:

"Of course, it is not without a reward. I intend to give this [The Death Eye of Balor] to the Community that makes the most

contribution in the war."

"Ah?"

"I heard that Willa the Ignis Fatuus possess the power to pass through the portals between death and life, and this item [The Death Eye of Balor] would be very much compatible with her power, am I right? Rather than letting such an item gather dust in our hands, it would be much more beneficial if it were to be given to her to use it to its full potential……how about that, Jack?"

"About that…..yea, I guess it is as you said it. Willa's elemental affinity would be much compatible with [The Death Eye of Balor]. But what happens if it gets into the hands of Communities other than mine? I think people besides Willa who can use [The Death Eye of Balor] to its full potential in the lower levels…shouldn't exist right?"

---Jack looked at Kuro Usagi and the others.

Though he said that, he must have felt that the [No Name] were another matter altogether.

Sala had also noticed the look from Jack and nodded in reply:

"Please be at ease. I intend to limit the rights of obtaining [The Death Eye of Balor] to only one of you from [Will-O'-Wisp] or [No Name].

"We…We're also a candidate for that?"

"Bu…But Sala-sama. There shouldn't be any comrades from our side that have the elemental affinity for it, right?"

Seeing how troubled they looked, it was Sala's turn to be surprised. Then she seemed to have suddenly remembered another topic.

"Oh, my bad, sorry for having forgotten it. Actually, Shiroyasha-sama had left with me a new Gift that she wanted to gift to [No Name]."

"Eh?"

"I guess you would have heard of it right? It's the reward for having solved [THE PIED PIPER of HAMELIN]. And with that item, I guess you guys will be able to utilize [The Death Eye of Balor] to its full

potential too.”

PakPak! Sala clapped her hands to summon a servant.

A servant then brought in a small box cupped within both hands that had a lid carved with the emblem of [Two goddesses who faced each other].

Accepting the small box that was carved with the seal of [Thousand Eyes] flag, Jin seemed a little flustered.

“Is this the new ‘Gift’?”

“That’s right. Facing the Game [The PIED PIPER of HAMELIN] that was hosted by [Black Death Demon Lord], you have met all the winning conditions. This item is the special reward for that game. You can open it to have a look.”

Jin solemnly nodded his head as he unsealed the little box.

Nested within the little box was a ring that was carved with a clown who blew a flute---The ring with [Grim Grimoire Hamelin]’s flag.

Part 5

[…This is…where?]

When Yō came to, she found herself in the area that was being made into an emergency casualty collection point. The other patients who were carried in were those who had sustained injuries in the battle.[79]

Yō was feeling a little embarrassed at the fact that she wasn't sent in due to reasons from the battle and had curled up into a ball on the bed.

……She then remembered the reason for her loss of consciousness before being sent in.

The dull throbbing pain that was coming from the back of her head should be due to the formation of a contusion. She could feel the swelling from her finger touch. However, to sustain such a light injury when the debris and tree roots should have crushed her….that was the fact that should have been the focus of the question.

[……I……]

"Oh, you're awake?"

At this moment, Asuka appeared from behind the curtains of the adjacent patient bed.

Seeing the hand swathed in bandages, Yō couldn't help but draw a sharp breath.

"Asuka! Your hand……"

"Oh, this? It's just s minor graze. You needn't worry about it."

Asuka casually sat on the chair beside her bed. While Yō managed to connect the dots.

It was Asuka who had thrown herself in to help her.

"……Asuka."

“Kasukabe-san, there’s something else that is more important. About this could you explain it for me?”

The item that Asuka had swiftly passed to her was the flaming logo.

Which was the registered brand of Izayoi’s headphones. Since Asuka was holding such a thing in her hands, there was no doubt that she would know about the headphones being destroyed as well.

Yō assumed that she would be getting a scolding and had burrowed under her sheets, curling up to become smaller.

“Kasukabe-san……Were you the one who took the headphones away?”

“……”

“Or was it not you?”

“……No.”

Yō quietly replied as she peeked her head out of the sheets.

Asuka folded her arms across her chest as she seemed to be pondering over something troubling.

“Then……Can I assume that this has nothing to do with Kasukabe-san?”

“……I don’t know. But it was found in my bag.”

“Did you place it in?”

“No.”

Yō answered immediately. That was the truth for she sure didn’t see it in her bag when she prepared her baggage for the journey.

Then, who could have placed it within her bag?

“Nn……By collecting all the facts we have now, it should be like this right? After Kasukabe-san has packed her baggage, the culprit stole Izayoi’s headphones and hid it into Kasukabe-san’s bag…… who could have accomplished those things?”

“……Me?”

“I’M REFERRING TO A PERSON OTHER THAN KASUKABE-SAN!”

Asuka gave a wry smile as she added that condition.

Hearing how her friend had believed her innocence, Yō slightly regained her usual self and sat up on her bed.

“Even…Even if you say it like that… I can’t think of anyone besides me who could have accomplished those---”

At that point, Yō suddenly swallowed her words and started to think.

Following that, she gave an expression that seemed as though she had swallowed a yellow lotus[80] as she said:

“……Asuka, lend me that logo for a while.”

“Eh? Why do you want it all of a sudden?”

“Maybe……there’s still a scent of the culprit.”

Asuka clapped her hand in understanding. She had almost forgotten that Yō had senses as sharp as a sniffer dog.

It seems that the both of them had been so shocked that they had overlooked such a simple course of action. Yō’s Gift was best used to its full potential in these kind of situations.

“……”

“How is it?”

“……Nn. It’s still there as I thought.”

However……Yō’s expression became more twisted and troubled. She couldn’t get why the culprit would do such a thing when it has never acted in a way to bring Yō any trouble till today.

There might be something going on behind all these……Just as Yō was worrying about it, the voices outside the curtains caused her to turn her head sharply.

“Nn……Kasukabe-san of [No Name]……Yes, got it! Is it all right to bring you just here, Calico Cat Oji-san?”

“Thank you nya, Kirin tailed Onee-san. It’s great enough that you

brought me here.”

“Nono, knowing about the troublesome situation, if I were to stand by and watch without doing a thing, it would be dishonorable to my Community [Six Scars]. Though I understand that I might not be much help here, I’m willing to help be the buffer zone between the two of you.”

“Good to see you my two usual customers～! I’ve brought back Calico Cat Oji-san who has been feeling quite down all these while!”

“Meowwwww! There’s no need to say all those things too!”

“Eh～? But Oji-san really had the look of one who was thinking about the end of the world coming to him and was very troubled in that corner.”

“Onee, that…that was due to various reasons……”

“……Calico Cat.”

Meow! Calico Cat who was hugged by the cat eared waitress jumped in fright.

Kasukabe took Calico Cat from the hands of the waitress and asked with a saddened look:

“Why?”

“That……That’s ……because it hurt my heart to see Oujo feeling so down……so I decided to take revenge……”

“……”

For it to be due to such a reason---the thoughts of scolding Calico cat that had risen up were now dissipated.

Yō calmed herself down as she closed her eyes to ponder.

---If she were to directly pass the culprit, Calico Cat, to Izayoi, that would be too easy.

However, did the fault really not fall on her as well?

Tracing to the root of the problem, wasn’t the real problem due to her very own lack of strength?

Moreover, being the person who fed Calico cat, she also had to take on some of that responsibility. If she were to just throw it all to Izayoi to settle, that would really be the end of their relationship.

"……Asuka."

"What's the matter?"

"As I thought, just knowing who the culprit is isn't enough. I must find a way to restore the headphones……Will you help me?"

"Nn. I'll be glad to."

Yō got off the bed and put on a new mood.

In the world of Little Garden, there must be a miraculous way to do it. The duo rushed back towards the dormitories in search for a plan.

Chapter 8

Part 1

---CANARIA foster home. 5/5 17:38.

After picking up all the pieces of the will and last testament that were scattered everywhere, Izayoi used his foot to tip the chair and its contents, the 'man in a tailcoat', who had been sleeping all this time beside the window, to the ground.

"WUAH YO!"

"Woah what Woah! How long are you planning to sleep, you fake lawyer?"

Izayoi accused the 'man in a tailcoat' with impatience creeping into his voice.

The man clambered back up, albeit unhappily, and brushed the dust off his black bowler hat before replacing it once more onto his head.

Following that, he tilted his head. "Well then, what's your business? Have you already completed the game?"

"No. There's still a critical portion that I've not figured out yet."

"……Oh? That means you have already got most of your conjecture down?"

The rim of the monocle was aglow with a radiance.

Allowing the man to inspect the 600 pages of the will and last testament that he had tracked down, Izayoi offered the answer to the riddle.

"The riddle was 'be to find the non-existent 'me' and 'you' and hand it over to the entrance---!'

"Firstly, it would be impossible to hand over an item that did not exist and I can only presume that it is a metaphor to describe something that exists---As for the item that is described by the metaphor? The answer is hidden in the previous stanza."

The [Host] is the 'me who doesn't exist',

The opponent who accepts the challenge is also the 'me who doesn't exist',

The challenge requirement is also me.

"The only line that is different from the other two is that it doesn't deny its own existence. So if I replace the phrase 'Challenge requirement' for 'last testament and will', then the only recount that wasn't mentioned in the will and last testament that did not talk about 'me' and 'you'---would be the incident where we had gone to observe the battlefield. And hence, that would be the answer for the riddle of 'the 'me' and 'you' who doesn't exist'."

"Oh ho……That's the correct answer, Izayoi-chan."

Besides clapping his hands, the 'man in a tailcoat' showed no sign of wanting to do anything further.

Narrowing his eyes, Izayoi tried to intimidate the man.

"……Aren't you the 'entrance'?"

"Me? That's a really interesting conjecture. So would you please not mind explaining it to me?" 'Man in a tailcoat' was full of smiles.

Izayoi checked his watch to confirm the time.

The time now was already 17:40. Though it wasn't the time to give explanations, he did not have any other options.

"……The following conjecture that I have is pocketed with doubts even to me. The words If I were to take it literally, the words of 'bringing everyone with me' that was written in the will and last testament would mean that she intends to bring all the others to the World of the Dead."

"Nn. Nn. Then?"

"In other words, the entrance that the last testament and will had described would be the entrance to the World of the Dead……and that is my guess……"

It was rare but this time, Izayoi faltered at his words.

The 'man in a tailcoat' touched his chin. Apparently finding Izayoi's words interesting, he started to chuckle.

"Hahaha, in other words, you believe that I'm the guide to the Country of the Dead?"

"No……I think you are not that sort of minor character."

"And what do you mean?"

The man nudged his bowler hat on his head a little as he leaned closer to Izayoi.

Izayoi opened his mouth to continue, not before heightening his guard and suspicions.

"---In South America, there's a religion that reveres a god who's always said to wear a swallowtail coat, a black bowler hat and the god is said to be in charge of life and death."

"……Oh?"

"The name of that god is [Baron Croix][81], it is said that the god who wears a swallowtail coat stands between life and death at the 'Crossroads that extends without end' where the human realm and the world of gods intersect……and this Death god also seems to have borrowed the power from the side of 'Life' to obtain omniscience."

Izayoi looked at the 'man in a tailcoat' straight in the eye. Those very eyes that had an eye behind a monocle.

If those eyes of his were really able know every single living thing in this world, then he would be able to make some changes to the will and change the contents.

However, the man who was named 'Baron Croix' by Izayoi seems to shake his head in lament.

"I see. That sure is a very interesting conjecture. But you, the person who said your conjecture seem to be in doubt."

"……"

"Oh? Looks like you are more doubtful than I had thought. Judging from your character, I had thought that you would be more excited and happy……Oh well, not that it matters. I will just answer the two doubts you have. Firstly, about that will. It was not tampered by me. That will is truly written by Canaria with her own hand."

"……and the other doubt?"

The 'man in a tailcoat' crooked his mouth into a smile.

"---That's the correct answer. I'm Baron Croix, also known as one of the Loa[82] who governs the route to [Guniee][83]."

Getting to his feet in a slow fashion, the swallowtail coat shook with his movements. And at that very moment, the presence of the 'man in a tailcoat' suddenly expanded.

Izayoi backed a step and another to pull away from that 'man in a tailcoat'--- [Baron Croix].

"……Ha! I see! Looks like you weren't just putting on an act of bravado."

"Of course not. But somehow you still seem to be in doubt until now?"

"Nope, there's no such thing……I did want to insist on thinking otherwise but now that I'm facing you, it would probably be futile to continue being stubborn."

Izayoi might have shrugged his shoulders in a nonchalant manner but cold sweat was still dripping down his back.

Noting Izayoi's response, 'Baron Croix' seemed to be very disappointed as he drooped his shoulders.

"……I see. No wonder Canaria was worried."

"What?"

"I mean that, Izayoi-chan, you are a very boring fellow. Oh my, it sure is such a waste and pity to the point that it makes one surprised, shocked and very disappointed in your entirety. Haiz. And here I heard that you were a much more interesting person. Although you might have a strong and abnormal strength, it is clear that you have already lost the method to release it. Or should I say restricted by your mental seals---Let me say it bluntly. You have become too used to this world and I can't let you clear the game in this condition you know?"

Tack! The heel of 'Baron Croix's' shoe tapped the floor. Holding down the bowler hat on his head, with his coat tails swaying behind him, 'Baron Croix' moved closer.

At that very moment, a violent wind shattered all the windows in the little room and the two people were drenched in the rain that was blown in.

"Well then, I shall have to adopt some extreme measures to start the ball rolling! And so, I'll hereby welcome you to my realm---The Crossroads of Life and Death!"

The violent winds whipped the shattered glass fragments into a whirlwind and gradually destroyed the walls of the room, seeming as though it were a shredder machine and the walls being nothing more than flimsy paper in its path.

Not long after, the floorboard of the small room had also vanished and Izayoi found himself falling in mid-air.

The current feeling that enveloped Izayoi as he gradually fell would have been far too strange to be classified as 'experiencing the unknown'. For it was as though the fall was unrelated to the gravity of the place but the world itself was becoming increasingly thin in its composition.

Although a person that fell through the darkness should have been filled with terror and anxiety, Izayoi who was on his way down---was filled with an incredible sense of excitement.

[---Could it be……that he's the real thing?]

The scenes of the various journeys together with Canaria in the past seemed like pictures on a revolving lantern[84] that flashed before his eyes.

---Previously challenging the legend that a demon rested within the waterfalls.

---Previously challenging the legend of the Spiritual Mountain to find the god that lived on it.

---And previously due to the desire to fill the gap in his heart, setting off to sea to find the world's end.

The hopes that were born from the thoughts of 'Maybe it will be

found this time' caused Izayoi to be in high spirits as he continued to fall in the darkness.

After some time, Izayoi noticed that the ground had started to reconstruct and at the same time, projections sprung up to form many grey towers and its base.

At the moment when the World above and below had formed the sky and earth, Izayoi's body was tipped over 180 degrees to fall towards the direction of the sky.

Just when he was gazing at the semi-spherical world that was continuing to expand outwards and wonder about how extraordinary it was---A flat object collided into his back for reasons unknown.

Getting back up immediately, he confirmed the situation of his surroundings.

"……Oi! Oi!.....What in the world is this……"

Upon a closer look, the sky simply did not exist.

Somehow without him noticing, the clusters of grey towers had been replaced by skyscrapers and had constructed an unfamiliar city.

The multitude of pavements and roads crisscrossed through the glass windowed skyscrapers. It was so exquisite in detail that it looked totally similar to that of a newly finished model.

The reason why Izayoi felt that the sight before him was like a miniature landscape[85] should probably be the fact that he couldn't sense any traces of human life from the place.

But that was only a small portion of the problem.

As for the reason that Izayoi was dismayed about, that should be regarding the world that seemed to be completely enclosed, on the interior side of a sphere.

[The sky and earth is seamlessly joined as a whole……Is this the world that exists between Life and Death?]

That's right. Describing this place as a [World that is constructed within the interior of a sphere] might be much easier to understand.

The spherical world was filled with skyscrapers and buildings that were so close and orderly that they looked like fish scales from afar. In addition, there were also many roads that seem to lead to many places. Ranging from those that led upwards to those that led downwards and even those that led left or right as they moved up the slopes.

Izayoi was gaping and taking in the sights of the street before him when he noticed that there was the faint outline of a person down the street.

"Izayoi-chan, this is the world that I've specially created for you. Do you like it?"

[Baron Croix] stood on the roof of a shorter building as he spoke to Izayoi before taking a plunge down the building to appear before Izayoi's eyes.

Spreading the arms that had everything above his wrists hidden by the swallow tail coat sleeves, he announced to Izayoi.

"Okay. From now on I will be hosting an additional hurdle for you. So don't be reserved and display it all before me Croix Baron …… for I too, want to have a look at the enormous strength that you were gifted with by the world with my own eyes---!"

In a flash, the 'man in a tailcoat' dissolved into a black shadow that sprinted along the vehicle lane.

Grabbing Izayoi who was late in reacting, the shadow forcefully flung him towards the floor by the neck.

"Bastard……!"

Izayoi grabbed the wrist of the 'man in a tailcoat' as he attempted to twist it upwards to counter his opponent's pressure that pinned him to the ground. However, his opponent had dissolved into an intangible shadow once more and had gotten behind Izayoi's back.

"Haha! Aren't you very kind?! You'd only tried to neutralize the attack when a god had already attempted to take away your life. It's really hard to find these kind of people nowadays!"

The 'man in a tailcoat' laughed mockingly as he lifted his leg to send Izayoi flying with a strike at his blind spot.

Izayoi's body danced in mid-air as he continued to fly in a straight line into the sky before smashing through the roof of a large building that was diagonally across his original place on the ground.

And after breaking through several layers of reinforced concrete, the noise finally grounded to a stop.

Having dissolved into the shadows again, [Baron Croix] rushed to catch up by following the carnage that was caused by Izayoi's collision. In fact, the building looked as if it had been shot by a cannon as it was crumbling from inside.

"……Oops,was it too heavy-handed a blow on him?"

[Baron Croix] muttered as he tugged on his bowler hat while furrowing his brows. However, it wasn't out of self-reflection that he had said those words. In fact, it's only because he didn't want to end it all before he could even start enjoying himself.

---On one hand, [Baron Croix] might be known as the God of Life and Death, but at the same time, he is also known as the god of love and lust.

And he was one that loved to hold a bottle of rum in one hand while messing around and simply engaging in intercourses, a God of love character that was violent and downright despicable.

Savoring pleasure was in his element[86]. But it would be very unsatisfying and unfortunate if the game were to end due to an accidental lack of restraint, before he could even have time to open a bottle of rum.

[Had Canaria's worry come true? Even if she were to send this sort

of youth to the world of Little Garden---]

"---Oi! Megane[87] Bastard!"

"What?!" He turned around in surprise. This is because the trail of destruction was still extending before him while the source of the voice had come from his back. And it was definitely not due to his reaction from being called a 'Megane Bastard'.

However, all his surprise and anger were thrown aside immediately.

That's because behind him--- a building traveling at speed of the third cosmic velocity was heading towards him.

"This---!"

It was the first time in the long span of his existence that [Baron Croix] had the facial description 'dazed till his jaw hung loose' used for his current expression.

That outrageous speed was so fast that it gave him no time to respond with his technique of shifting into a shadow.

Immediately, [Baron Croix] raised his right hand and released a darkness that was shimmering like a hot pocket of air.

The building that was hurled and traveling at the speed of the third cosmic velocity had only needed to touch the dark shadowy mass to be broken into fragments before disintegrating. The remainder had also crumbed into rubble that showered down upon the other buildings below, causing them to collapse as well.

"---Oh? To actually use a defensive stance……Then may I presume that the previous attack might have given you a fatal wound?"

Izayoi's voice echoed in the area. And what was more surprising was that he did not sustain any injuries. Though his appearance might have been more dusty and dirty, there was no sign of a fatal injury. Even so, his facial expression had undergone a dramatic change.

The light smile showed more confidence than before and a pleased look had begun to emerge from his gaze.

"That's good. Very good. In fact, it was great! You sure have some nice moves! I wonder how long has it been since I had my blood

boiling inside me like that…? Haha. Due to the wide gap between then and now, I sure can't remember it at all! As expected from a guy claiming to be a Kami-sama[88]! Even the extra hurdle is unique and interesting---!"

Boom! Izayoi started forward at a sprint that was similar to that of a cannon being shot from its barrel and the driveway beneath the contact points with his feet started to develop depressions that were similar to craters left behind by small meteorites smashing into Earth. [Baron Croix], slow to react once more, was grabbed by the neck by Izayoi's hand and forcefully flung towards the ground.

"Oof!"

And subsequently, a kick sent his whole body flying into the air and crashing through 12 buildings.

Izayoi stood on the rooftop as he spread his arms.

"---Let's fight to the end! Kami-sama, I request for you to accompany me in this game and play to my heart's content! Having prepared this special stage for me and having prepared the extra hurdle for me……and for being the stand-in agent whom Canaria prepared for me! Since that's the case, your job should be to continue putting up with me until I'm tired of the game!"

[Baron Croix] stood up from the pile of rubble.

Adjusting his swallowtail coat and dusting it a little as he replaced the bowler hat back onto his head, he was full of smiles as he replied:

"Very well. If that's your wish……Then I will thoroughly be your opponent as the stand-in for the Host."

"But---" He hesitated for a while.

"Lad! This game is already mine. If my hit is too hard and it kills you……please don't hold it against me---!"

Spreading his arms, he started to release the shadowy darkness, which shimmered like pockets of hot gas, into his surroundings and gradually expanded it.

While [Baron Croix] was releasing his powers that marked him as a Death god……Izayoi used that time slot to shift his gaze towards

the digital watch on his hand.

"……Nn. What a headache……will I be able to make it in time like that?" He had said it in a low mutter that wouldn't have been heard by others.

Just when his mutter seemed to disappear like the pop of a bubble, the two began to engage in their fierce battle.

Part 2

---[Underwood] Underground City, In front of the rubble that was the dormitory.

The cleaning up for the rubble on-scene had already begun. It had been an hour since the end of the Titan's surprise attack and in view of the need to complete their reconstructions before the eve of the Harvest Festival, every minute and second would be very precious to them.

Perhaps they should be grateful for the open heartedness of the South Side residents for being willing to hear out Yō's request as well as help her out even in the midst of their busy schedules.

However, upon seeing the corpse that was left of the headphones, Asuka had immediately expressed her thoughts:

"Just give it up."

"……Uh……Can't we try a little harder?"

"That's impossible. From the perspective of physics, it is completely impossible to restore its original appearance. Rather than trying to fix the headphones, you might as well try to think up a way to appease Izayoi-san."

Asuka had already given up on the headphones and was casting around for other suggestions to solve the problem.

Although Yō really wanted to repair those headphones regardless of its state…… alas, the world worked in a way which didn't allow everything to be as smooth-sailing as what one would have wanted.

If it were only the cushion or the headband that got separated, things would've looked much brighter. The problem was that the outer casing had been crushed completely and it would be an impossible task for the both of them to try fixing it.

"But…… talking about appeasing Izayoi……how should I do that?"

"Well, about that… I think the best choice…… Would be to package the Kuro Usagi-eating plant and Kuro Usagi as a set and……"

"What do you intent to do next, huh?! You baka!"

Pak! The attack launched with a paper fan came from behind.

Yō's eyes widened in alarm.

"That's a really great suggestion!"

"There should be limits on wanting to play dumb too!"

Pak! The paper fan came down once more.

It would seem that Kuro Usagi had already returned together with Jin and Jack from Sala's place.

And a depressed Calico cat was carried in Jin's arms.

"Seriously……Yō-san! We've already heard the details from Calico Cat-san. Why didn't you choose to come discuss with Kuro Usagi about it!"

"Uh……Because……The titans came suddenly and there wasn't time to talk about that kind of ……"

"Kuro Usagi isn't referring to that incident! I meant about the number of days that you can participate in the Harvest Festival! If you were willing to find Kuro Usagi to discuss, Kuro Usagi and Izayoi-san……and Asuka-san would have given Yō-san the priority to attend! But why was it that you refused to come talk to us about it?!"

Kuro Usagi grabbed Yō's shoulders and started to rock the whole person to and fro and to and fro and to and fro and to and fro and to and fro and to and fro and to and fro and to and fro[89] as she pressed her for the answers. Yō felt as though she were about to get a concussion, but it wasn't the time for her to care about such things.

"Bu……But……already... said that we would use the game to decide……"

"A game will always be just a game! But we live under the same roof, shared our good times and bad times as one and are comrades who fight shoulder to shoulder under the same flag! If you had any worries, it would be reasonable for you to have come to us to discuss it! Moreover……Yō-san, to actually be so worried to the

extent of tampering with the game result! And Kuro Usagi being completely unaware of it……"

Yō and Asuka were startled and exchanged a look.

Then the sights of the two naturally turned towards Jack.

"Jack……was it you……"

"Yahoho……While we were on our way here, I had a talk with Kuro Usagi……Seems like it was something that I should have kept mum about."

He scratched his pumpkin head.

Kuro Usagi looked at the two of them with tears in her eyes.

"Jack-san told Kuro Usagi……the Gift Game that was previously hosted by [Will-O'-Wisp] was cleared by the both of you together. And though it was a game that they had clearly lost, Jack-san was still proudly talking about how the both of you displayed an admirable sense of teamwork, allowing him to gain quite a bit from it……"

"……Uu……"

The earnest tone of Kuro Usagi left the both of them speechless and they bowed their heads, looking down.

---That's right. Yō and Asuka had both participated in the game that [Will-O'-Wisp] hosted before the Harvest Festival.

That candlestick stand that could store fire was a trophy that the both of them had won together.

The first to be unable to stand the silence was Asuka who stepped forward trying to explain:

"No……Kuro Usagi, it's not like that! It was my initiative to suggest the plan to Yō-san……"

"No it's not. It's because Asuka saw me in my dilemma and was worried about me……"

"……No. Kuro Usagi also has a responsibility in causing both of you to be so bothered. It's because of Kuro Usagi's high expectations that caused the little gap to open between us...Kuro Usagi is really…

Very sorry."

The three of them expressed their apologies in three different ways[90].

Jin who still carried Calico cat walked to Yō's side. Tilting his head, he asked:

"Are the headphones really done for?"

"……Nn…Really…Very sorry……"

"No. Since it's already spoilt, then there's no way either. If it is irreparable, then we can only choose another approach to solve the problem. And I have a proposal if you guys are willing to hear me out for a while?"

Hearing Jin's sudden proposition, Yō looked up in surprise. It would seem that Yō didn't expect Jin to come up with a proposal.

However, just at that moment, the bell that was used to alert everyone about an emergency started to toll and echo throughout [Underwood].

A teenage dryad girl leapt from the web like patterned tree roots and shouted to everyone:

"Bad News! The Titan tribe is leading a scary army of an unprecedented size……They have started their attack on [Underwood]!"

---Following that, the sound of the Earth being trampled upon reverberated through the entire Underground City.

Part 3

Upon climbing up onto the tree roots, Yō and the others found that the members of [One Horn] and [Five Claws] were already in a state of disarray and semi-destroyed in formation. Even though it wasn't long since the toll of the warning bells, they couldn't help but wonder what could have happened to cause this within such a short amount of time.

Just as they were panicking, Gry descended from the skies while whipping up his whirlwinds. He must have been through quite a fierce battle for his prided wings seemed to be in a mess after engaging in battle and his hind leg had suffered quite a deep gash from a blade.

Gry who had landed beside Yō was looking pale on his face and he opened his trembling mouth:

"Yō! Great timing! Now, take your comrades and make a run for it immediately!"

"EH?"

"They have a monster within their ranks! These guys are on a totally different level compared to the ones we faced earlier! If this goes on, we will surely be destroyed! Please hurry to the East Side and ask Shiroyasha-sama to provide assistance!"

Just when Gry was still shouting agitatedly, the sound of a stringed instrument being plucked sounded again.

Yō who had an impression of that sound suddenly lifted her head.

[This tune……It's the same as the time with the fog!]

Although Yō remembered the situation of the previous battle, the other party had not been kind enough to give her time for conveying her information.

The sounds of the stringed instrument being strummed and plucked continued to sound out one after another and the comrades at the frontlines were falling with the sound of each note. Even for Yō and the others who were very far from the source of the sound, they were also struggling to keep their consciousness.

"It's that fellow! The sentry in entrusted to the task of keeping watch had his consciousness stolen by the sound of the harp, allowing the other party to be twice successful in launching their surprise attack! Although the frontlines are being held up with the support of a masked knight, who knows how long it would hold up……"

Yō and Kuro Usagi helped to translate Gry's sad and painful news.

Upon hearing those words, Jack immediately opened his mouth in surprise:

"A masked knight? Could…Could it be that Faceless had also gone to join the battle?"

"Hey……Jack-san, things aren't looking too good for us! If that fellow meets some kind of mishap, [Queen Halloween] will not sit by and ignore the matter! We'd better go help her immediately!"

Jack lighted his gunny sack with a summoning of a huge ball of hell flames while Ayesha leapt onto that Jack transformation as they rushed off towards the frontlines. Yō and the others who were left behind turned their questioning gazes to Gry once more, wanting to know more information about the current situation.

"Even the person with the mask is unable to win against that Titan who plays the harp?"

"The correct way to put it would be that the situation is so tricky, it hampers her from doing so. The closer the sound, the stronger the effect it has on you. Even Sala-sama seemed to have her true powers restrained by that sound in yesterday's battle. Judging from the above, the item should be of a Gift of at least God class."

"God class……Then what about the masked Titans and the Titan who's playing the harp? How's their situation?"

"They were together in the battle at first, but the harp playing fellow has already disappeared. The masked knight is now currently holding up by bearing the strumming sounds while continuing to fight on……And, the owner of the harp isn't a Titan."

"Eh?"

"The other party's height is around the height of you guys. It's a human that uses a long swathe of clothes to cover the face. Judging

from how the Titan tribe seem to follow the instructions of the person, that fellow might be the commander."

Gry seemed to give off a low growl. And during that time, the Titan tribe continued to attack in waves.

The sounds of the roars of Titans and the dying screams of Eudemons woven together could be heard from where they stood.

"……And it wasn't that fellow only. Confirming from the skies, the number of the Titan tribe exceeds five hundred and is a huge army that hasn't appeared before. And since [One Horn] and [Five Claws] who are responsible for the frontlines have already entered a state of being destroyed, then……"

"……Uu……"

After knowing that the situation was much worse than they had thought, Yō was momentarily stumped for words. She, who couldn't even do anything against one Titan, couldn't think up of a better plan. Even if she were to help translate, the contents were so bleak that she didn't know where to start from.

Hence, Kuro Usagi helped to convey the situation to Jin and Asuka. That's also when Jin took a step forward and spoke a line that made everyone feel surprised:

"No problem. I have an idea."

"……Eh?"

"Not too long ago, I just received the Gift that was sent over by [Thousand Eyes]. If the Titans are of a Celtic descent, this gift of mine should be able to cause the enemy lines to fall into confusion in a short time."

"Is….Is it true?"

"Yes…… But it isn't enough with just that. If we do not get rid of the harp player who's commanding the army, it will only cause the situation to continue without end. So, to prevent the magic caster from escaping……Yō-san, we need your strength. Would you be willing to lend us your strength?"

Jin looked towards Yō.

Yō blinked her eyes in surprise but immediately furrowed her brows.

"……Does that mean you are trying to offer up the most important task to me?"

"No. If my predictions are right, then we would come to a situation where we would need Yō-san's strength. And it is a job that only you can accomplish."

Unblinkingly, Jin stared back at Yō. Under that gaze, the thoughts that suspected Jin of passing the job to her out of pity had also vanished.

"……I understand. Tell me about the plans."

Part 4

---The both of them used the back of the building as a stepping ground and had leapt back from each other.

At that moment, the building that was originally used as their stepping ground was blown to bits due to the impacts.

Under the intense steps of their feet, the last building had also exploded and accompanying the large amounts of dust and smoke that drifted up from the rubble, it began its gradual collapse.

Although Izayoi and [Baron Croix] were panting heavily, there was not a sign of a scratch on them.

On one hand, it was Izayoi whom all attacks on him were rendered ineffective, and on the other, it was a god who could restore and regenerate at a fast speed, no matter what injuries he suffered.

The battle between the two had definitely grown more intense but conversely, the situation had descended into that of a see-saw effect[91]. Tugging at his bowler hat, [Baron Croix] looked around at the surrounding rubble with a troubled expression.

"Oh my, Oh my. Originally, this was a stage that I separated out from a part of my realm to create, but I didn't think that it would be so easily laid to waste within a few exchanges. Come to think about it, what the hell is that body of yours? Why are you still up and kicking when I've already laid a death curse upon you?"

"Nice question. I would really like to know the answer to that too."

Izayoi replied simply. But in actuality, it was he who was more surprised about the death curse bouncing off him.

However, in his tone, the excitement that he once had was gone.

Desiring to make the game more heated once more, a [Baron Croix] who was taken aback, brought up a suggestion:

"So? Staying in this kind of rubble littered place shouldn't be able to make you feel motivated right? If you wish, I can reconstruct a stage and this time I can even add a touch of creativity to it by creating a stage that has huge mountains and valleys and even the

appearance of Hell that is much grander……"

"No. It's enough."

---What? [Baron Croix]'s shut his mouth in surprise.

Izayoi glanced at his watch before closing his eyes as he tilted his head to the skies.

"17:58……Baron Croix, the time is almost up. Although I might not feel satisfied about being unable to defeat you completely, I don't think that I require any other additional hurdles."

"……Oh? You are satisfied?"

"Didn't you hear that I'd said that I wasn't satisfied with this earlier?! Can't you listen to the words of others properly?"

Izayoi clicked his tongue harshly but he wasn't feeling completely unsatisfied in his heart.

Spreading his arms, he carefully thought through all the things that he had experienced today.

"……You're the god of Life and Death. Having the godly power to bring death and able to revive the dead. Even the term of zombie that the world knows of had its source connected to you right?"

"Oh my, Oh my. About that…… your knowledge is quite profound. You are totally right about that."

"In other words, you believe that even if I lose the game and result in the deaths of those rascals, you only need to revive them, am I right?"

"……Nn. I won't deny that."

"But it is that point that makes me feel uncomfortable……Humans are living things that are easily killed by a chop, hit or a shot from projectiles. And precisely because of that, I've had to rein in my actions. Then here you come telling me that even if they get chopped, hit or get shot to death, they can still revive? Hmph! If you let me see that trash like sequence for myself, it will only make me be less able to restrain myself from this day onwards."

So, it's enough.

Hearing Izayoi that kind of tone that seems to be a declaration of victory before fleeing, [Baron Croix] didn't even bother to hide his disappointment as he openly mocked Izayoi.

"Oh my, Oh my……what control? It sure doesn't seem like you to say that kind of statement. The source of one's will to survive is only born from the search for pleasure and for people like us who are the epitome of hedonists, shouldn't that be a very important part of our lives that we must never let go off? Moreover, Canaria's first lesson would have been to teach you to [Face your feelings candidly][92], am I wrong?"

"……"

Izayoi did not deny that and he just closed his eyes.

Following that, he tilted his head to the sealed skies above and spread his arms.

"……Hmph! So you aren't really that omniscient as the legends say."

"Hm? Yeah. I'm a god who had risen from the level of a spirit[93], and have not reached the stage of omniscience."

"Oh I see. No wonder you didn't know the true meaning behind Canaria's words."

"What?" [Baron Croix] was now perplexed.

Izayoi looked to his front once more with his arms continuing in its outstretched position to gesture to the rubble that were the collapsed buildings around him.

"Take a close look at these buildings around you that have been reduced to mere concrete rubble. If I were to intentionally throw a tantrum, it would just be a matter of minutes that I can cause the structure of the Human society to be destroyed. In this kind of situation, it isn't even thinkable for me to throw a tantrum now and then to release my stress. And when facing that kind of 'me', the words of [Face your feelings candidly] only serves as a way to restrain me in chains."

"……"

"[Face your feelings candidly]---That's right. That fellow would always say the same words to me no matter where we went.

Traveling with me across the continents, sailing across the seven seas, setting off to visit all the World Heritage sites to share with me the feeling of being in awe and appreciate the countless experiences---She instilled those feelings into me so that I will never destroy the world."

In order to prevent Izayoi from destroying this world with his power.

Canaria had utilized the method of showing him the beauty of the world to seal Izayoi's strength.

"……Nn, and that's what it's all about. Even if it's very interesting, I do not require anything that might destroy the restrains laid upon my body. For it wouldn't matter if it is tomorrow or the day after that……My life will still continue to be lived out in this world."

And that should be considered as admitting defeat right? Izayoi gave a wry smile as he looked up at the sky again.

[Baron Croix] on the other hand seemed to have suffered an unexpected blow that wasn't within his calculations.

A different kind of look started to emerge from the eye behind the monocle for the first time and Izayoi finally felt as if he were being looked at seriously for the first time as well.

"……Izayoi-chan, do you like this world?"

"Nn. I like it a lot. At least I do like it to the point of being able to accept the fact that I will have to live it out in a boring way for the rest of my life."

Izayoi gave his candid reply immediately and there was no sense of shame, shyness, haughtiness, hyperbole[94] or any other feelings that were in his eyes.

Letting out a sigh, [Baron Croix] used a hand to press down his bowler hat as he muttered to himself.

"……Really? Canaria really caused the highest level of all the extremists which is yourself…… to be able to adapt to this world."

"Yes, that's right. The Sakamaki Izayoi who was originally a troublemaking machine had now become a person that can lead the god, [Baron Croix] who has always been evaluated as 'wise', to be

able to stand by as witness to my promise to be a person who will adapt to the societal norms. For a memento, I would really wish to receive a letter of acknowledgement from you too."

Izayoi gave a loud laugh. Although it was a carefree laugh, the timing of the laugh made it sound very empty.

And [Baron Croix] had already seen through the smile that seemed to be a mask that hid the heart that was already drowning in disappointment.

Pulling his bowler hat even lower to hide his face---he lifted his head after setting his determination.

"---But this won't do. Izayoi-chan."

"What?"

"I've only just realized the true meaning for this last game that Canaria has planned for you and I've just understood how to draw the curtains for this game! That seal that Canaria has left on you……even if I have to use the harshest methods, I will have to rip it to shreds---!"

Taking off his bowler hat and tossing it aside without paying it any mind, he then pointed towards the core of the spherical world.

In the next moment, the spherical world started to groan and rumble as it started to shrink rapidly.

This seal world did not have any escape routes and Izayoi opened his mouth in astonishment:

"What…What are you planning to do?!"

"I'm causing this miniature world to collapse and shrink to nothingness. That way, there will not be a Host as well as a Participant! If you truly wish to be saved, you can only choose to defeat me or this world, for there are no other choices!"

[Baron Croix] displayed his strong determination.

And Izayoi felt his anxiety writhing throughout his body.

Part 5

Yō followed the plan of the operation as she flew into the sky to wait for Jin's signal.

At a height of a thousand meters above ground, she was even higher than that of the highest point in the huge region called [Underwood].

Climbing to the position where she wouldn't be spotted by the enemies, she waited for the moment of chaos.

With the ability of an eagle's sight, Yō could see the situation on the ground very clearly while being too far for the Titans to spot and attack her as well.

[To launch a surprise attack, this should be the best position. If Jin's plan of causing confusion really pulls through……]

Yō quietly bid her time as she observed the situation from above. On normal occasions, this important task would have been handed to Izayoi right? But Izayoi wouldn't have cared about the surprise attack strategy for he would have just broken through the front while using the opportunity that was caused by the confusion.

And he would snag the victory in a way that no one would ever be able to imitate and will surely give his loud hearty laugh of "Wahaha!".

"……"

If I'm able to achieve this objective…… Can I be like him, proudly laughing my joy out loud?

Thinking of that, Yō put her hands on her hips and puffed up her thin chest.[95]

"---Wahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahahaha, Hmm, seems like it won't work."

Due to how embarrassing it felt, more embarrassing than she had visualized, she had given up halfway through the laugh. No matter how excited she was, she would never be able to laugh in that way.

And even though Yō was alone in the air where there no one would be around beside her, she still felt that ashamed by that embarrassing act and was blushing to her ears. The act was not suited for her character after all.

Changing her mood, she refocused on the battle below. Hovering in the skies, it gave her a clear view of the Eudemons that were struck down one after another by the Titans.

……Maybe she might have had a chance to befriend those Eudemons.

Reaching that thought, Yō felt a twinge of sadness.

Part 6

During that time, Jin and the others were trying their best to get into the midst of the enemy lines. Riding on Gry's back, they managed to maintain a low-altitude flight, weaving through the gaps between the Titans as they moved forth.

"Come to think about it, where's Gry-san's jockey[96]?"

"He had fallen into a river in the previous battle and was washed away."

"Um……I'm sorry about that."

"No, it's nothing. You needn't worry! My jockey isn't that weak to die just like that!"

Gry bent his beak as he laughed. Currently, the reins were held in Asuka's hands.

Asuka's words were not only limited to controlling the will of others. It could also bring out the true potential of the other.

Having received the order of [Fly forth with speed and skill], Gry was now easily dodging through the huge swords and chains of the Titan tribe and was progressing rapidly across the battlefield. Regarding his sudden elegance in flight postures and soaring abilities that were much better than usual, Gry was very surprised.

"Asuka's Gift sure is incredible! I feel as though it has increased the spirit level of my body itself!"

"Is……Is that true?"

"Yea. Rather than saying that you are able to bring out the potential powers of the Gift, you might as well say that you can temporarily lend your spirit level to add onto the targeted Gift. After all, if it were only me, I definitely wouldn't be able to spot the gaps between the Titans and take that as an opportunity to advance."

"I see." Kuro Usagi nodded her head in understanding.

According to his theory, it would then be able to explain why it would be difficult for Asuka's Gift to be used on those opponents

who are above her spirit level. And it was also said that she had previously caused Jin to have increased athletic abilities.

[But if it were truly the case……Asuka-san's ability rather than being called a Gift……seems more like---]

"Jin-chan! Is it okay at this distance?"

Asuka pressed on her long hair that was being swept back by the winds as she asked the confirmation from Jin.

Though Jin might be tensed to the point of feeling stiff, he managed to give a few nods of his head.

"Yes, since we've already gotten this far into the enemy lines----"

"Gahouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhou----!"

The group had just stopped their advance and immediately they were faced with a huge sword coming towards them.

However, Kuro Usagi had leapt from Gry's back and used her blue lightning that came from her [Vajra Replica] to burn the Titan to crisp.

"Don't worry, Jin-bocchan! Kuro Usagi will never allow any of the Titans who are running amok and lawless to get near! Now's the best time to use the Gift that you have inherited---[Genier Contractor][97]!"

Kuro Usagi's voice echoed in the battlefield.

Just like a reply to Kuro Usagi's shout of encouragement, Jin raised his right hand that wore the ring of [Grimm Grimoire Hameln][98] up into the air.

"Under the oath as my [subordinate], appear once more to this world---[God of Black Death]!"

In the next moment, a wave of jet black wind swept wildly across the battlefield.

The black evil winds that seem to writhe like a living thing and seeming to possess a tangible body of its own had swept across the entire battle field within a blink of an eye. The circular array at the middle of the summoning had a flag that depicted a clown playing a flute and it was causing the waves of black wind to coagulate and

be compressed at its centre.

Soon after, the black winds that have gradually taken the form of a human figure released all of the gases that had been compressed previously and caused an explosion.

In the explosion, a black and white speckled light could be seen at its epicenter and a human figure could be seen amidst that light---

"Where have you run to, SHIROYASHA～～～～!"

--- suddenly roared the name of that god who was utterly idiotic and flippant in her work, but yet totally unrelated to the war, in a fit of anger.

And following that, she lashed out just once and defeated a hundred Titans in one breath.

Asuka was dumbfounded for a moment but she soon realized who it was that Jin summoned.

"Wait…Hold on! The new Gift is [Black Death Demon Lord]?"

"YES! Although she no longer holds the identity as a God after being separated from the Grimoire of Hamelin, she's still undoubtedly a powerful fighting force to be reckoned with!

"In addition, she---Percher[99] holds the ability to manipulate the power of Black Death! If the legends were true, her power should be very effective against the Celtic Titans!"

That's right. This was part of Jin's intentions.

---In the Celtic mythology, it had also recorded the anecdotes on the Titan tribe.

And amongst them was a piece named [Myths of Danu][100] that recorded about how there appeared to be a saying that [Other Titan Tribes were dominated due to one who was able to manipulate Black Death] during the time of the Titan tribe battles.

[Controlling the medication for the unconfirmed symptoms]---That could be said as the most powerful and evil of the methods to

dominate over other tribes.

Not forgetting the fact that Percher was backed by 80 million souls to back her up besides her manipulation of Black Death.

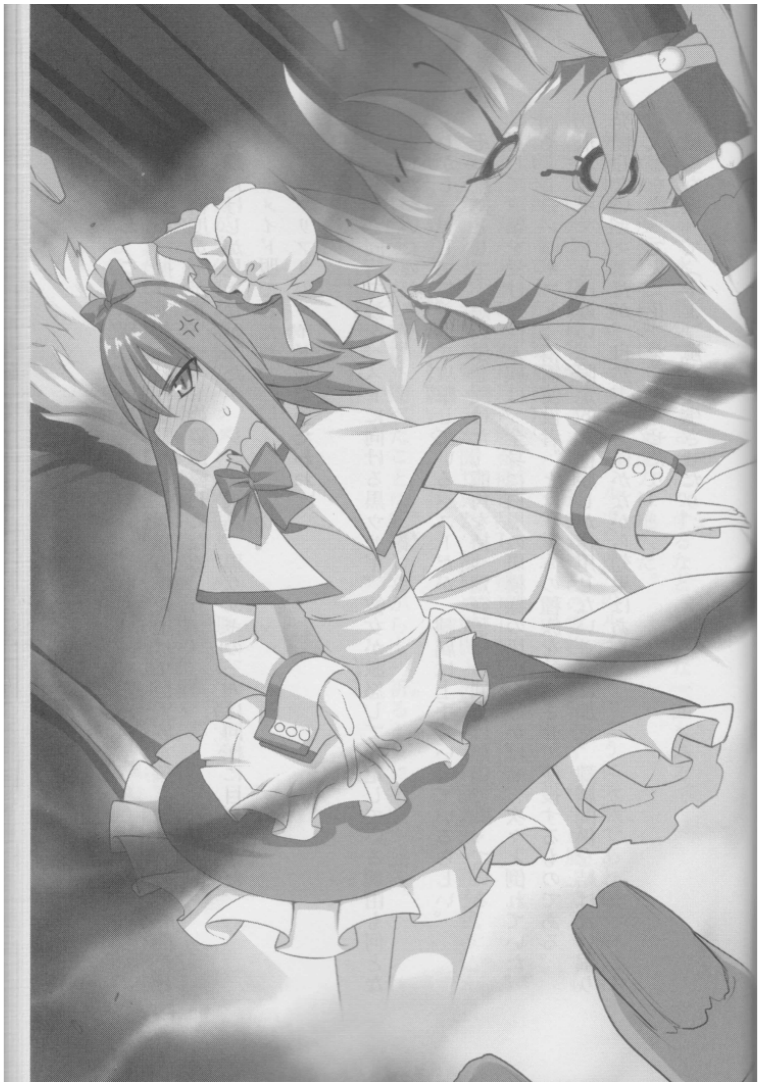
Jin had planned to follow the legends and use Percher's strength to wreck chaos amongst the Titans, but---

"Come out now! Get the hell out now! Get your ass out immediately, SHIROYASHA! How dare you make me, a former Demon Lord wear such a vulgar and shameless outfit!"

"Gahouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhouhou----!"

"Shut the hell up! You useless trash!"

Percher waved an arm as she retorted angrily and a shockwave that was filled with the voices of resentment was released, sweeping the Titans to the floor. At that moment, the black winds around her seemed to thin a little and Percher's figure appeared before their eyes.



Although it was just a short glimpse, but at the same time, it caused Jin, Asuka and Kuro Usagi to start doubting their eyes.

"……That's a maid outfit right?"

"…… It definitely is a maid outfit that really has a lot of frills."

"Shiroyasha-sama……"

Kuro Usagi was already tearing up as she pitied Percher's predicament. She must have realized the reason for Percher's furious outburst that left her in this state of frenzy.

Although at first glance it might seem to be a random and indiscriminate flurry of attacks, but in actuality, the [Subordination] seemed to have progressed quite smoothly.

The evidence could be seen from how the [Draco Greif] members were still able to continue fighting without suffering injuries when the Black Wind Waves touched them.

In comparison, the Titans who had received the direct attack had started to have black and white spots appearing on their bodies and were falling one after another.

---Jin's Gift of [Genier Contractor], was a type of Gift that could cause the Fae folk to be subordinated to him as well as issue tasks to them to be accomplished.

The difference it had from Asuka's Gift was that [Genier Contractor] could only be used upon a specific type of race to be effective, and it wouldn't be able to activate if there wasn't a contract with the Fae set down beforehand. However, it can still have a small effect on nature spirits.

For example, the manipulation of fire spirits to give rise to fire (sparks).

Manipulation of wind spirits to whip up a (slight) wind.

Manipulation of water spirits to produce water(vapor) etc. You could say that it had packed quite a colorful side to it.

When coupled with a completed contract, the control over the Fae would be increased.

Even if one successfully made a Demon Lord become a subordinate, if the owner were to be as immature as Laius of [Perseus], the strength of the Demon Lord would be largely weakened. However, if one had this Gift of [Genier Contractor], it didn't matter how low one's spirit level was for they would still be able to completely dominate the other even if the opponent were to be a Demon Lord.

An irate Percher successfully smashed through the Titan ranks and was annihilating the enemy one by one.

And then came the thing that they had expected. The sounds of the harp strings being plucked. Similar to the previous battle, a thick fog started to descend on the surrounding regions and completely

stole the sense of sight from everyone.

Jin and the others let out a sigh of relief as they saw that the battle situation was progressing in the direction as per their efforts and expectations. And following that, they looked towards the skies as though they were saying a prayer to the heavens.

"Yō-san……It's now up to you."

Part 7

After the fog broke out, Yō tightly clutched her pendant as she concentrated her sights below.

Perking up her ears and emitting ultrasonic waves like a sonar system, she sought out the source of the harp's position.

[This fog is able to confuse sight, smell and hearing but since the source is still sound, it should be possible to scout out the exact position of the other party with this method.]

Yes, and that was the method of scouting that only Yō could do. Even if the sense of distance was being interfered with to cause an illusionary error in judgement, it was still possible to pinpoint the location of the enemy from the many sound waves that were colliding together.

If a problem were to be found with the plan, it would only be that the distance of Yō was too far from the ground and she would have to make adjustments to her position.

[……Found it!]

Sensing her target, Yō released the powers of [Genome Tree], seeming to become a meteor as she dropped straight down. With the precision like that of getting a thread through the needle's eye, she dropped towards the source of the harp sounds.

In the arms of an enemy whose robes covered the face, there stood the [Golden Harp] that had the Divine powers of abundance and weather control.[101]

Even if she couldn't defeat the opponent, as long as she could get that harp away from the enemy……

"And that is now---!"

Breaking through the fog, Yō started to fly downwards. When the enemy who was escaping finally noticed Yō's sudden entrance from somewhere outside the periphery of sight, he or she might have been flustered? But anyways, Yō had executed a skillful maneuver that seemed like she were dancing in the air to pluck the [Golden Harp] from the enemy's hands.

Before the enemy could react with an attack, Yō had escaped into the skies with the trophy hugged tightly within her arms.

At the same time---The outcome of the battle between [Underwood] and the Titans had been reached.

Part 8

During that period of time, the spherical world was continuing to shrink while screeching and rumbling. And the world was getting smaller.

The earth that was pressed against each other gave off a sound that was similar to the wailing of the earth. Huge pieces that acted similar to continental plates as they were folded and eventually swallowed completely.[102]

Izayoi had recovered his composure but he was still unable to figure out the real intentions of [Baron Croix] and could only stare at him while giving a low roar.

"……Baron Croix, what's your aim?! If this continues, even you would be……"

"That's right! Sakamaki Izayoi! Once the world between life and death is closed, there is nowhere for us to escape! We will both be snuffed out in the cracks in the realm of oblivion! If you truly wish to be saved, you can only depend on your power to tear apart this world!"

[Baron Croix] spread his arms as he gave his dramatic speech to Izayoi.

Izayoi harshly clicked his tongue and raised his fist high. Gathering all the strength from the small tips of his fingers to the ends of the five fingers, he added the torque from the rotation of his hips to launch his attack with a punch.

The rubble of steel and cement that were buried below the rubble had formed a huge crater due to the heat and force that Izayoi's fist had wrecked. Although this crater seemed like a dried up lake, it was soon swallowed up by the shrinking earth that made it disappear without a trace.

"Your full strength shouldn't be like that only right?! Sakamaki Izayoi! You plan to join Canaria in the Gardens of Death?! That shouldn't be your wish! If you do not want to die, let me see the realm that has yet to be known!"

"Uu!"

Shrink!

Shrink!

The ground that seemed to be in a hurry to shrink gave out crunching sounds as the debris collided and it wasn't long after that the shrinking caused the height to be decreased, such that even the mountain of rubble from the top was almost touching the mountain of rubble from below.

In a blink of an eye, the sky had lost its height and seemed on the verge of coming down.

Although Izayoi had swung his fist for quite a few times, his level of destruction was still unable to break through this sealed world.

"Do you see it?! If you were to lose just like this, the kids will also be dead! Are you okay with that?"

"---Uu……You megane bastard!"

Izayoi bit his teeth with the strength that might have broken his molars, as he raised the speed of the swing of his punches for both arms.

Again and again he kept at it until his fists finally bled from the multiple fractures.

[Baron Croix] also seemed to have lost his patience at long last and he shouted loudly:

"You moron! With a punch that cannot even shatter the stars, how do you expect to break through [Guniee]?!"

"Then, what do you want me to do?! You megane bastard!"

"Just like what I just said! Use a punch that can shatter the stars! So long as you use your Gift, leaving this place shouldn't be a problem for you!"

Hearing the crazy request and the strange term, Izayoi was taken aback.

"……Gift?"

"That's right! The strength that you currently wield is at most the top layer of its full potential!"

Hearing [Baron Croix]'s suggestion, Izayoi stared at his own two hands.

"You say that my strength is only at a top layer?"

"That's right! So long as you use the strength that lies dormant within your body, you will surely be able to rip through [Guniee]!"

Gaining an optimistic look from Izayoi's change in attitude, a slight smile played on the lips of [Baron Croix] as he spread his arms, seeming in the mood to taunt.

"……I've said it before. Let me see the real of the unknown for myself. And you should have already realized this. That you, Sakamaki Izayoi, are more mysterious than everything in the world put together. Well then, if you do not utilize that miracle that hides within the deepest parts of yourself in [Guniee]……you will lose that chance forever!"

"……"

Although Izayoi was already having cold sweat, his mood was pumped up once more.

---Other than the first cry that he had when he was brought into the world, he had never had the chance to use his full strength. For Izayoi, the current world was one that was a fragile and dreamlike shelter to him.

However, he was now told by the other party that he can let out his full strength without holding back, and even telling him to use a dormant power that even Izayoi himself did not know of.

[A dormant power that is in the body……]

Izayoi felt his feelings soar in his chest and unconsciously raised his right hand up high. And it was due to that natural movement of his body that he realized.

To draw out the power from himself, Sakamaki Izayoi, this was the best posture.

"Just like that……You still aren't able to utilize your own Gift huh? Then just desperately swing your fists for now."

[Baron Croix] spread his arms as the swallowtailed coat fluttered

behind him with the wind while he continued to scrutinize Izayoi's actions.

"Take this……Baron Croix!"

At that moment, a beam of light appeared from Izayoi's hand that tore through the Heavens and the Earth. This beam of light easily pierced through the shell of the world that was still shrinking and seemed to be the pillar that was holding up the world that was moving towards imminent destruction.

Prying through the sealed world that was moving down the road to self-destruction, Izayoi got out from the World between Life and Death.

Epilogue

Part 1

---[Underwood Underground City], New dormitory.

The next morning, the person who came to meet Yō and the other [No Name] was none other than that masked female.

She had already completely washed off the blood stains that had spurted over her body during the Battle with the Titans. And today, she continued to wear the pure white armor that seemed to exude a sense of prudence from her as she waited for them in a practiced and courteous manner. Whereas Jack had spread his arms as he introduced her to them in his usual 'Yahoho' laugh.

"This is [Faceless]--- the knight who obtained the favor of [Queen Halloween]! You can address her affectionately as 'Face'!"

"……Is it so? She's……"

Asuka who had retreated to the back was watching Faceless with mixed feelings. After all, Asuka had seen it for herself, the strength of Faceless. It was no wonder that she would have second thoughts and doubts about getting close to the other party without her guard and getting all friendly was out of the question when they had only just been introduced.

Kuro Usagi, for whom it was her first time meeting Faceless, she could also immediately understand that there exudes a unique atmosphere from the person who stood before her.

"I see……Since she's the favored follower of [Queen Halloween], she should be able to borrow the Celestial powers of the Celestial spirit[103] who governs the boundaries of the world to summon the headphones right?"

"Yahoho! You're right! She's the new face whom we of [Will-O'-Wisp] have invited over as a guest member! If it's her, she should be able to summon a replacement!"

Hearing Jack's affirmation, Yō's expression had brighten up significantly.

However, she frowned as a slight worry crept over her heart.

"But……if we summon from another world……the cost should be very expensive right?"

"Yahoho! Let's not talk about the cost first. In fact, in normal circumstances, such requests are supposed to be completely rejected. But taking into account that we will be maintaining a steady relationship with you [No Name] for days to come……This time, we'll just count it as a friendship price."

"Nn. I've also decided to make a contract that from today, all daily necessities that we use will only be ones that are produced by [Will-O'-Wisp]."

"Is……Is it……Jin, thank you."

Yō looked towards Jin and expressed a smile of relief.

Jin waved his hands frantically.

"This……This isn't anything much! All of you have given me countless favors! This kind of small thing isn't anything much to talk of……and in fact, there's still another problem that has to be solved."

"……problem?"

"Yes. Strictly speaking, we aren't using the power of [Queen Halloween] to do the summoning this time, but we are borrowing the control over the star trajectories to change the causality[104]---In simple terms, we need it to be a resummoning ritual with the condition that [Yō-san had brought the headphones over to Little Garden right from the start]. So if there isn't a pair of headphones in Yō's house, this method will be unable to be established……" Jin carried a worried look as he followed up with the explanation.

In contrast, Yō's eyes were alight with joy.

"……No problem. I have a pair of headphones that is similar in brand to the one Izayoi uses, lying in my house."

"Rea…Really?!"

"Nn. And my dad said that it's an antique piece that was a classic product in its time. If it's those headphones, Izayoi will be sure to forgive me."

"Ei? But those headphones should be Kasukabe-san father's item right? Is it okay to take it without permission?"

"Nope, it's okay. Since the whereabouts of my dad and mum are still unknown."

Yō honestly spoke of her past.[105]

But for Asuka who had lost both of her parents, she was tongue tied by that revelation and had an expression that showed those feelings as she bent her head down.

"So…Sorry, I didn't know that it was like this……"

"No, it's because I've never talked about it before……and…"

Yō took out the pendant that her father had given to her and squeezed it tightly.

"We……the three of us were never willing to talk much about ourselves, so there's no way that we could have known."

"……Nn. You're right."

"So I plan to use the opportunity when I return the headphones to have a talk with him to get to know each other better. After all, it's a friendship that I've gotten with hard work, so I will have to take the initiative to maintain this relationship through my efforts."

Yō seemed to change her mood as she looked forth.

---"Abandon your family, friends, wealth and all that you have in your world and come forth to Little Garden".

Since she had answered that invitation letter that denied all responsibilities, overbearingly demanding but was better than everything else…

Then,she might as well try to slowly be more aware of the surroundings and show concern to others. Bringing her heart that has forsaken her past and become much lighter to take the initiative in getting close to others---

Part 2

---When Izayoi woke up, the sun had already sunk in the western horizon.

Perhaps it was during the course of reading the last will and testament that he had carelessly fallen asleep? He had actually lain on the table and drooled in his sleep. And that was the first time in Izayoi's life that he had experienced such an unglamorous side of himself.

"……18:15 already? Ah, damn it. Why am I feeling so hungry."

"Oh! Then would you like to go eat dinner, Iza-nii?"[106] Suzuka leaned her whole body on Izayoi's back.

When was it that she managed to stealthily get behind me? Izayoi who didn't notice her presence until the last moment was quite surprised. But of course, he did not let it show on his face.

"Suzuka, get off me! How many times do you want me to repeat before you understand? If you want to hug me, at least come back when you have a D cup."

"Oi……What's up with that?! I, Suzuka-chan, am sure that in the near future, I will be a voluptuous hot babe with all the curves filling out nicely! It's more worth it to do the pre-orders now while the offer is still available, you know?!"

"Yeah, Yeah. Near future means that it isn't confirmed. Anyway, just get off me."

Izayoi grabbed the back of her collar and pulled her off his back.

Suzuka pouted her cheeks angrily and rushed out of the small room.

"Hmph~! I won't care about you, Iza-nii! It would be good if you just starved yourself to death here! You big Baka![107]"

"No, that will be quite a problem. Help prepare dinner for me too."

Izayoi gave a very big yawn.

Suzuka suddenly kept away her unhappy look as she looked at

Izayoi in earnest.

"……Nn, I got it. Iza-nii, I will be waiting for you to come over okay?"

Suzuka gave an unnatural pause before leaving the room.

It was then for a messy haired bespectacled youth, Homura, to walk into the room.

"Iza-nii, you awake?"

"Yea……Wait, why is it still another headphone?"

"Nn. I've already adjusted and modified the cat ears portion. It shouldn't be too tight now."

"Really? Nevermind. I'll just pick it up later tonight. I want to finish reading the remaining portion of the last will and testament for now. You can go join Suzuka to prepare the dinner first."

"……Okay, I got it. Iza-nii, you'd better remember to take it later okay?"

Homura had also given an unnatural pause before leaving the room.

Sending him off with his gaze, Izayoi then turned back to flipping through the last will and testament on the table.

"Izayoi-chan, you actually drooled when you slept. Ew, so dirty."

Stop nagging, you smelly Oba-san!

"Stop your tantrum. Don't look at me like that. In fact, I really am relieved after having worried for you for such a long time you know? After all, the possibility for you to be trapped in the game wasn't zero. Hence, at this point in time when the last will and testament is still in your hands, it makes me feel really happy…… Congratulations, Izayoi-chan. Having successfully reached this point, you have finally earned the rights that you are entitled to."

"……"

"Nn. Looking at your expression that says "I don't know what you're talking about", it doesn't matter whether or not you know of it, for everything up till now can be said to be the work of fate. But to open the huge doors with the hands of Man, it will always require the intersection of several possibilities and their separation as well. The intersection is originally a random occurrence that appears in a very small range[108]……Ah, forget it. The explanation of the theory portion shall be left to Croix to do the honors. The problem that I should address right now is regarding that invitation letter that's to be passed to you."

"Invitation letter?"

Not understanding what letter it was referring to, Izayoi had tilted his head in puzzlement.

Just then, a letter slid out from beneath the last will and testament.

"That's the invitation letter and it will surely change your fate. It's a letter that will allow you to experience a daily life like the one you had today……but even if you do not open that letter, there's also the possibility that you can find your happiness in this world. You have the right to forget the invitation letter and continue your current life. In this world, the future for you to live together with Homura and Suzuka in a nice and cozy environment is still open. I would like you to re-confirm all these and hence arranged for that game."

Izayoi had obtained a shelter, a family and memories in this world.

Canaria's purpose was to allow Izayoi to slowly reminisce the past and make the comparison. And so, [Baron Croix] had been sent to test him.

"……but the guy you've sent sure is a bit too crazy to handle. Thanks to you, I sure had quite a bit of cold sweat flowing down my back."

"How can you be that useless? The you at the age of ten would probably have happily beaten the opponent till he's barely alive right?..... Forget it. It was me who had brought you up that way to make you become incapable of those acts. In contrast to your haughtiness in your way of speech, you have actually grown too biased towards the common sense. To the point that you can still find a common ground to compromise with this world when you actually hold such a power that defies common sense……Hence I

had wanted to give you the right to make the choice. I believe that no matter your choice, it will still leave some regrets. So the last choice should still be made by you."

"……"

Izayoi solemnly turned to the next page.

"As I've already said earlier, it is also possible for you to find your happiness in this world. That I can guarantee to you.

But all it takes is just to open that invitation letter for this guarantee to completely disappear.

I believe that many hardships await you.

And you will meet many situations where you will be shamed.

However, you may save a large number of people that's beyond your grasp.

……So, I hope that you will really think this through.

If you can set your heart down to abandon your family, friends, future and everything in your world---Then, you may open that letter."

And at that, the last will and testament had ended without any other words to say her farewells.

For Canaria, when her time in the world had ran out, she had already counted that as saying her farewell to Izayoi.

Izayoi picked up the invitation letter and re-confirmed the words of the last will and testament.

"……This means to say that there's no turning back after I open this letter?"

Of course, there wasn't a reply but Izayoi was quite sure.

---A long time ago when they had gone to see the battlefield, she had told him that if he wanted to go to a battlefield again, he would have to do it based on his own will and depend on his own two feet to advance into the region. He was sure that those words she had

said were words that she had offered to him beforehand for this current situation.

Though the huge pile of last will and testament that spanned 600 pages did not talk about it, but Izayoi could sense the turmoil of her many emotions while she wrote it.

"……Ha! Actually, there's nothing much for me to consider about!"

To prevent himself from sinking into sadness, Izayoi gave up all thoughts.

---That's right. He had met a very interesting experience today.

And Canaria had also promised that tomorrow, and the day after……This sort of situation will continue to occur. If that's the case, there is no reason for him to reject.

Izayoi stood from the table and reached for the seal of the invitation letter.

Before he undid the seal, he turned to look at the room door.

"---Goodbye then, Suzuka, Homura."

Following that, he slowly opened the wax sealing and read the contents of the letter.

Part 3

The group of people followed the spiraling stairway of [Underwood] as they walked to the higher grounds. Following that, they climbed the tree roots that had a web like pattern to reach the surface of the ground beside the river. And there stood a circular array depicting the [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Zodiacs] that Faceless had prepared beforehand.

"To…To actually use the ecliptic pathways……I didn't expect it to be that formal. But are you sure that you can really handle?"

"……"

Faceless only replied with a sliver of a smile at her lips. Although she seems to be much more laconic in character than Yō, it would seem that she was quite confident.

Sitting Yō down in the centre of the Twelve Zodiac circular array, she took out a sword that had the [Queen Halloween] flag carved upon it. Then, the rays of the sun began to converge on the markings of the Twelve Zodiacs that were depicted on the ground, causing them to start glowing.

Standing to a side while watching the ritual, Asuka decided to break the tension as she asked Kuro Usagi:

"Um, Kuro Usagi, why does Halloween, the Sun and the [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Zodiac"s] have a relation?"

"Eh……Halloween originally referred to the ritual and Festival that were hosted to mark the split between the Sun cycles into two. And during the time when the cycles are being in transition, the veil between the worlds will also begin to crumple."[109]

After Kuro Usagi finished her explanation, Jin also came to the rescue by adding clarifications.

"The Celts were quite skilled in their astrology, and even had their own lunar calendars. Just that they do not have the explanation for how the cosmos came about……and Halloween is one of the Festivals which has influence from the Celtic culture that is still surviving."

"Oh……I see. Then, what of the [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Zodiacs]?" Asuka asked timidly.

Jin gave a deliberate cough before starting on his reply:

"What we term as the ecliptic is actually the [Trajectory of the Sun's movement], while the Twelve Zodiacs are the horoscopic signs that are observed along the trace of the Sun's path across the skies. In Little Garden, there's also a rite to determine the Sovereignty of the Sun[110] with accordance to the number of the Authorities of administration over the Twelve Zodiac. It can be said to be a very important thing."

"The ritual that is being held now is with the use of [Queen Halloween]'s power to break through the veils of the worlds and borrowing the power of [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Zodiacs] to act as the complex stabilizer ritual……But even if it were to be borrowing the power of [Queen Halloween], Kuro Usagi hadn't expect to see Humans being able to do the summoning……"

In contrast to Kuro Usagi's reaction of awe and respect, Asuka sucked in a breath.

"That person…… is a human?"

"YES. Although she has a lot of weapons equipped onto her body, she's definitely a human. And she also possess a very strong talent. In fact, it should be almost equal to you guys. Looks like the saying that [Will-O'-Wisp] being the strongest Community in the North Side might not be wrong."

"Is that so?" Asuka replied.

On the other hand, Yō who continued to be seated in the middle of the circular array was desperately maintaining the image of the headphones in her mind.

[My dad's headphones…… My dad's headphones……]

If it were to be said as a ritual to [Change the Causality], it would definitely seem like a large scale rite. However, putting it simply as describing it to be only an act to slightly change the event before Yō was summoned to the world of Little Garden, it would still be not quite true.

Yō only needed to spend half a day keeping the image of the

headphones in mind while leaving all the rest to Faceless to think up a solution.

[Due to the problems caused by the Titan tribe, Izayoi will be coming over to the Harvest Festival by tonight. So I must succeed no matter what……]

Yō continued to mutter about the headphones like a possessed individual as she waited for the ritual to end.

After a period of time had gone by, when the circular array that depicted the [Ecliptic path of the Twelve Zodiacs] came to a state of completion with its power levels filled to the brim, Yō's consciousness was transported back to two months ago---The time when the invitation letter from Little Garden was held in her hands.

---It was the end of Autumn and its frequent autumn rains. Coincidentally taking my dad's headphones to wear on my head, I had received the invitation letter from Calico Cat who had rushed into the room after picking it up from the outside. And I reached my hand to the seal of the letter.

Although I looked quite nonchalant, I was actually quite excited. Because a letter addressed to me had actually fallen from the skies……In this day and age, this sort of event that was filled with a sense of fantasy and adventure was definitely quite unbelievable.

However, at the moment when I, Kasukabe Yō was about to unseal the letter, a wave of doubt washed over my heart and mind.

[…… What happens if I do not open this letter now?]

If I tore the letter to shreds just like that, would it become a situation whereby [Kasukabe Yō did not go to Little Garden]?

If it were like that, several of those painful memories could be just erased without a trace.

There won't be the experience of being torn by the claws of a ToraNingen[111].

Won't contract Black Death and suffer the pain of getting close to death.

And won't feel the pain that's like someone squeezing my heart because of the first relationship that I've established with others as friends---

[……If I stayed in this era, I would not need to experience all those right?]

Thinking of that, I also felt a sense of pride that welled up inside me.

Having arrived in the world of Little Garden, in a short time of two months, I had already faced so many painful and tiring experiences but I had also gained many happy memories.

The balancing scales that weighted my life had tipped to the left and right many a time but there was still an undeniable fact about the feeling that I have in my heart.

---The 'me' who had decided to move forth to Little Garden had made the right choice. Holding confidence in my thoughts, I unsealed the invitation letter in my hands.[112]

Part 4

Boys and girls with wondrous talents and much distress, I address thee:

If thou strive to test thy Gifts,

Thou shall cast aside thy family, friends, possessions, everything in the world of thinest.

And come forth to thy [Little Garden].[113]

Part 5

Izayoi's vision was unfolded before his eyes in a breath. The floor beneath his feet had turned to rubble and he was tossed towards the skies of a distant place.

Bearing the pressure of the air rushing up at him as he fell, Izayoi also stared at the jaw-dropping grand view before him in amazement.

[This……]

It was possible to see the cliffs that would make one think of the end of the world.

It was also possible to see great cities that would even make one mistakenly see as a model made to an architect's scale.

Everything that far exceeded Izayoi's imaginations was presented before his very eyes.

[Where the hell is this place!]

That was the thought that sprouted in Izayoi's mind as he continued to bear with the wind pressure brought from the fall.

This unknown world that seemed to stretch out infinitely was filled with a strong sense of vitality. It was so great that it could even make the miniature world that [Baron Croix] created to pale in comparison.

Watching the strange birds that he had not seen before fly pass his falling body and towards the far off lands, Izayoi couldn't keep it within him anymore as he shouted.

"Whe…Where the Hell is this?!"

The doubts and suspicions of his heart had finally took the form of his words as they escaped from his mouth.

And following those feelings, a bubbling sense of glee was bursting forth from the deep recesses of his heart.

The soul that had originally lost hope of finding contentment was

now being injected with a sort of growing warmth at this moment.

And he could definitely feel it. The hole in the deepest recesses of his heart that shouldn't have been able to be filled up ---In that very moment, Izayoi felt that he was being completely destroyed in the very best and craziest style.

"Ha…… Ha……Wa Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha! AiYaAiYa, This sure is very exaggerating! No matter how you look at it, this sure is too out of the common sense! That stupid mom!"

By the time Izayoi came back to his senses, he found himself to be laughing like crazy as he continued his descent.

After all, all he could do now was laugh.

To be actually summoned to the world that was like the treasure trove that he had spent all his entire time searching for in the past, the rush to laugh upon finally reaching the destination was completely irresistible.

If he did not take the chance to laugh the seventeen years worth of his efforts to find such a place, how else and how long would he be able to dissipate this joy?

Izayoi spread his arms wide as he gave a roar using all the air in his lung capacity and the muscles from his abdomens where the diaphragm has expanded to give the loudest words:

"BYE, My world!

Good afternoon, New world!

From now on……THIS WILL BE MY WORLD---!"

Finally arriving in the world that matched up to his standards.

Izayoi who held this sense of awe and appreciation[114] in his heart could not stop his wild laugh.

"HaHa……
HaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaWaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHa

YaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaYaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaWaHaHaHaHaHa

HaHaHaYaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHeiHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaYaH

HaHaHaHaHaHaHa
HaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHaHeiHaHaWaHaHaWuahya!"

Splash---! Izayoi suddenly dropped into the water and caused an amazing pillar of water to form due to the sprays.

Izayoi, who had previously been laughing out loud with is mouth hanging open, had almost lost his life due to the large amounts of lake water that rushed into his lungs. But to face such a life threatening situation upon arrival in the new world, it was like a good omen to him. After all, this was also one of the first experiences in Izayoi's life.

He then set his determination to make it his goal to find the person who came up with this sort of random summoning to make sure to "thank" the person properly.

Epilogue 2

Part 1

---[Underwood Underground City], New Dormitory.

Yō was sitting alone at the corner of the room, completely lost in her state of depression.

The cause of this situation arose from the incident that happened close to the river bank, just after the summoning ritual had ended.

It all began when Yō appeared with the headphones on her head and Asuka throwing herself on Yō in a hug with those eyes of hers sparkling with wonderment.

"Ooh, Kawaii! Kasukabe-san! Those headphones are really kawaii neh!"

"Ka……Kawaii?"

What's that about? Yō felt doubtful as she took off the headphones from her head to make a confirmation.

Instantly, blood seemed to drain out of her face and caused her to turn pale. She was sure that the headphones worn on her head were definitely a pair of normal headphones. However, the headphones that she held in her hands now---no matter how anyone looked at it, they would surely say that it looked like headphones with nekomimi on them.

"How…How come? It's the same brand with the flame logo, but why did its shape change?"

Feeling troubled, Yō allowed Asuka to hug and exclaim for all she wanted.

The others had also used a subtle look that couldn't be described in words to gaze upon the nekomimi headphones.

"Do…Do you want to give those nekomimi to Izayoi-san?"

"Um…about this… I think we should let Yō-san to make the judgement?"

"Yahoho…… We don't know about it yet do we? Maybe he might be

even happier?"

The group that was giving off an irresponsible laughter were making their way over.

Whereas Faceless, who completed the ritual and didn't look worn out in any way at all, quietly sheathed her sword before walking over to Yō's side to gaze at her silently.

"……"

"?"

"Is there anything wrong with me?" Yō tilted her head quizzically. Since the other had her face covered by the mask, it made it impossible for her to judge her thoughts. Hence Yō could only return the stare.

Jack could only smile wryly as he got between them for he was afraid that two laconic individuals might not be able to have a smooth conversation.

"Feisi, what's wrong?"

"……I wish to see her Gift for a while."

"Eh?"

"During the summoning, the star trajectories have significantly veered away from my original predictions. This is the first time I've met such a situation. If my summoning failed, the only possibility would stem from the Gift she holds."

So she wished to confirm it for herself, Faceless reached that conclusion.

Although Yō was a little troubled by that, she still removed her pendant---[Genome Tree] to pass it to Faceless.

Accepting the pendant, she then started to do a careful inspection of the pendant on her palm.

"……This is?"

"My Gift that my father made for me."

"YES! Yō-san's Gift is called [Genome Tree]. By establishing a

friendship between other races, it can materialize the unique characteristics of the race in the format of a Gift! It's quite a valuable item!"

Kuro Usagi perked her rabbit ears as she felt proud for her comrades.

Faceless lightly touched her chin with her hand, seeming to be in deep thought. And after a while later, she abruptly asked Yō:

"……You said that this allows you to obtain the Gifts of other races right? Then could these inward and outward spirals be explained as the representation of the Phylogenetic tree[115]?"

"……Nn, Perhaps."

"……I see."

After Yō had nodded to give her affirmation, Faceless also nodded her head seeming to come to an understanding as she handed the pendant back to Yō before turning her back to the crowd.

Although she had already left the crowd in a stately manner, she chose to stop at the edge of the cliff as she seemed to have remembered something at the very last moment.

"---I will just count it as a compensation for the failure in the summoning, albeit reluctantly……Here's a piece of advice. That pendant's ability isn't only [Obtaining the Gifts of Other Races]."

"Eh?"

"What I mean is that the purpose of the pendant isn't just a Phylogenetic tree that records the facsimiled[116] data. But it's a Phylogenetic tree that needs to gather many DNA samples to create a unique development and progress from there to evolve to the next stage---Taking samples from the [Genome Index], to [Evolve] and also to [Combine]……Those should be its original purpose."

"Eh……Nn……Huh? You could talk that much?"

Due to her inability to grasp the flow of the topic, Yō had tried to forcefully steer the conversation to another direction. Although she thought that it was her best attempt yet at a conversation, when those words were heard by others, it would most likely be thought of as an insult.

Though Faceless fell silent for a moment, it was impossible to determine if she had taken offense at Yō's reply, but she did open her mouth once more to say in a soft and almost inaudible voice:

"---Be careful. Because in normal cases, that Gift tends to be beyond the control of the Human realm."

Leaving her words at that, she then leapt off the cliff to disappear without a trace to the [Underwood Underground City] below. The rest who were left behind were momentarily dazed as they watched the back of Faceless disappearing into the distance without moving an inch from their original spots.

After a while more, Kuro Usagi was the first to recover her wits.

"……In the end, the problem of the headphones was still left unsolved?"

Yō gave a small "Ah". And there, still held in her hands were the nekomimi headphones that had the flaming brand pasted on it---[Crescent moon No.16].

---After that, using the time before Izayoi's arrival, Yō and the others who had already given up on the ideas of repairing or summoning had combed the Harvest Festival Plaza for accessories or small items that might be able to replace the headphones. However, all the items that they came up with were all lacking in some way or another and they had come to the conclusion of [Give this nekomimi headphones to him] to help conclude the whole matter.

[Although the headphones were really cute……but to let Izayoi wear nekomimi headphones?]

……As expected, that was still too far-fetched.

"Haiz～" Yō huddled even smaller at the corner of the room as she gave a very weary sigh.

Calico cat had also sighed as he felt guilty and regretful about the incident.

Shortly after, Izayoi and Leticia would have arrived in [Underwood Underground City].

Part 2

---OuterGate number 7759175, [Underwood Great Waterfall], Fir Bolg Hill.

The sun had already set in the west and it was the time for the first stars to shine brilliantly in the skies.

Immediately upon his arrival in [Underwood], Izayoi had his gaze that seemed to sparkle in excitement transfixed by the Great Tree before him. The culture and view that could be said to be a big contrast against the North Side caused him to feel a swell of emotions within him that led him to give a sigh as he stood on the hill top to scan the surroundings around him.

"---The greenery, clear waters that flow from the river and the sky-blue stage. Haha! It's totally the opposite of the stones and flames of the North Side! Doesn't it feel a little too perfect? NO. I'm real glad to accept this kind of situation! In fact, I'm so happy to the extent that I want to get close and intimate with it! So, Leticia, can I go for a while to get close and intimate with it?"

"Okay. I will help to tell Kuro Usagi and the others."

Leticia wore a wry smile as she agreed to Izayoi's request.

Izayoi seemed like he couldn't stand a moment longer as he started to dash forward, running towards the Great Tree of [Underwood].

He then lightly leapt with a *Doink Doink Doink*, easily climbing up the Huge tree branches.

Upon reaching the highest point of [Underwood], he then reached out his hand to test the branches and leaves by exerting some pressure as he planned to nest himself amongst them.

The succulent leaves displayed an unbelievable amount of compressive strength as they were resistive to Izayoi's pressure and was pushing back at his hand. And so, it would seem that the mattress made out of these succulent tree leaves and branches would be much more comfortable than he thought.

"Good. This is good. It's great! In fact in this situation, it could be said to be awesome. But if only there's some food, it would be even

better……Ah, forget it. I will just have the starry skies by itself tonight."

Allowing himself to fall back onto the tree leaves behind him, Izayoi didn't bother to reduce the force of the fall. Although he did have some thoughts of finding Kuro Usagi to ask about the Titan situation……Izayoi just felt like doing some stargazing alone for tonight.

While enjoying the pounding water sounds of the [Underwood Great Waterfall], he too looked up at the starry skies of Little Garden.

"……Hmm. The position of the stars in the world of Little Garden seems to be at the same location without any changes……"

Deneb, Altair, Vega……Izayoi counted with his fingers as he traced the Summer Triangle of the three stars.

In the past, Izayoi had often gazed upon the Starry Skies just like that. But recently, his mind was occupied with the things that happened around him and that made him realize something.

Living that dull and monotonous lifestyle in the past, he would never have thought that he could live his life in the way that he did currently. And that showed how fulfilling his current life was. Smiling wryly, Izayoi was experiencing that truth for himself.

[I wonder if Suzuka and Homura are doing fine……Forget it. Those two should be living their lives out with much vigor and would have continued their lives as though no one was beside them in the first place.]

Izayoi shook his head slightly to dismiss that nostalgia that didn't suit him.

Just then, he heard the rustling sounds of the leaves and twigs behind him as they started to shake and he turned his head lightly.

"……Kuro Usagi? What's the matter?"

"What's the matter, you ask? It's precisely because you, Izayoi-san did not come to greet us. So Kuro Usagi came over to find you. Expressing your thanks to the [Host] is quite an important matter you know?"

"Oh well, chill a little can't ya?[117] Scouting out the enemy's condition is also an important matter you know?"

"Enemy's condition……You mean the Titans?"

"No. I meant this [Underwood Great Waterfall]."

"---eh?" Kuro Usagi tilted her head and rabbit ears.

Izayoi stood up from amongst the densely interlocking twigs and leaves as he turned clockwise to scan the whole of [Underwood] before opening his mouth with much emotion in his voice:

"This water stage is one of the top views of the South Side Lower levels. Although it's scale and the force that it exudes is much inferior to the [World's end], even for me, I must say that this is still a piece of beautiful land…I say. Kuro Usagi, don't you feel that we should also aim for the construction of such a stage?"

Izayoi looked towards Kuro Usagi with a fearless smile.

This question was so abrupt that Kuro Usagi wasn't able to respond for a moment. But after understanding the implied meaning of his words, she immediately replied the question with a question:

"In other words, the enemy's condition that Izayoi-san refers to…… is to be the [Region Master] to construct a stage that exceeds [Underwood] in grandeur?"

"That's right. And this plan doesn't have to be confined to the Outer Gate of 2105380. If we can increase our Community Grounds, the things that we can do will also increase. It will also be much easier for us to collect Gifts……Although we are currently still at the level of tidying up our farms and water facilities, but I heard that this [Underwood] only spent ten years to revive. So, we must be able to strive towards this level within the span of ten years. For this kind of water stage view is definitely good enough to be aspired towards."

"Wahahahaha!" Izayoi gave his wild laughter……Come to think of it, ever since he arrived in the world of Little Garden, he had already grown used to this style of laughing. Even saying that this is his [Mask](laugh), might not be far from the truth.

Forget it. Since the laugh was that merry, it didn't matter.

Izayoi indulged himself in his loud laugh for a while before turning back to tell Kuro Usagi this:

"……Displaying our flag in the stars and being the most magnificent Community on the ground. With that, our name will spread to everyone's ears and even to those companions who are still lost to us."

"----Uu!"

The unexpected revelation of the true significance behind the plan caused Kuro Usagi to suck in her breath and clasp her hands before her chest.

Pretending not to notice, Izayoi pointed his finger towards the direction where the Titans had invaded from previously.

"However, our priority now is the Titans. Although I don't know if they are the remnants of the Demon Lord or something, but their acts sure show little self-understanding[118]. There's no need to wait for the ascension of the [Draco Greif] Alliance. I will just take this opportunity to take on the side of the aggressor to completely solve the problem. For it would be intolerable if they were to continue making trouble when the Harvest Festival starts officially."

"……Hehe. That sure is Izayoi-san's style. Then Kuro Usagi will also be willing to be an aggressor to play a part in annihilating the criminal Titans." Kuro Usagi perked her rabbit ears as she proudly puffed up her chest and held her head high.

Izayoi didn't contradict her but only nodded his head as he continued:

"Well then, let's give them a welcome clash as we go head to head with them tomorrow. But for now, we should conserve more of our strength."

Doink! Izayoi fell back onto the Water Tree leaves and twigs once more.

Kuro Usagi also sat down beside him as she lifted her head to gaze at the starry skies. Before starting awkwardly:

"Actually, Kuro Usagi has something that must be told to Izayoi-san……that… is about the headphones……"

"Oh, that? Kasukabe's Calico Cat has already confessed?"

"Eh?" Kuro Usagi's rabbit ears perked up in surprise.

Izayoi had a sly smile as he took out a little bottle with Cat fur from his pocket.

"Seeing how the person left such an obvious evidence, it made me totally unmotivated to even play detective…… At first, I had suspected that Kasukabe might have ordered Calico Cat to do it but she didn't show any suspicious signs to even make it remotely possible. Moreover, if it were Kasukabe, she would have been able to do it more perfectly. With that in mind, I assumed that Calico Cat was acting alone for that would be the most plausible conclusion."

Saying that, Izayoi tossed the little bottle with the Calico Cat fur to Kuro Usagi.

Frantically catching it, Kuro Usagi held on to it tightly as she asked worriedly:

"……Are you angry?"

"Nope. I've also told Leticia that as long as it is a thing that a layman can construct, there's totally no monetary value in it. I only wanted to follow Homura's wish, to help him wear it upon my head as a live advertisement only."

"Is…Is it really?"

"Rather than that, I'm more interested in the favored subject of the [Halloween Queen] or something that I saw being mentioned in the letter. Is that person strong?"

"Very."

This reply was without hesitation and to hear Kuro Usagi give this kind of high evaluation that could be said to be very rare, Izayoi's curiosity had also started to rise.

"……Really very strong?"

"Yes. If there's someone that can defeat you, Izayoi-san, there might be no other person other than her."

For Kuro Usagi, that should already be the highest evaluation.

Izayoi nodded his head in satisfaction as he lifted his head to the starry skies.

"Is that so…… Then, I guess I will have to thank the Titans for that one upside to the situation. It's all thanks to them that I managed to get this extended duration to join in the Harvest Festival. Needless to say, since there's such an interesting fellow here, then I must find a way or another as long as I can get the other to spar with me."

"To chase for the throbbing sensation[感动][119]?"

"That's right. Living in this world, if Humans do not have that throbbing sensation to inspire them[感动][120], they would just fall into idleness and regression! As long as there's a chance, I must completely replenish my reserves of it."

"Wahahaha!" Izayoi laughed heartily.

Kuro Usagi looked at Izayoi quietly as she smiled.

"……Actually, in the past……there was a person who also said something similar to your words."

"Oh? Then that sure is a promising fellow."

"Hehe, do you still need to say that? After all that person is the one responsible for being the Community's strategist-sama with role of playing [Host]. Suggesting ideas in that same bossy manner every time. And with that serious expression to tell Kuro Usagi something like: 'It's the job of the host to give the participants a heart-throbbing experience[感动][121]. If it were only the exchange of money, it will be the end of the fate that brought us together. But if it were to be the sensation of the heart[感动][122], it will not be able to disappear completely. For that sensation[感动][123] is an indispensable nutrient for those who live in the world' and other similar theories."

But the count of the customers that returned was really quite good as well, young Kuro Usagi happily recounted.

Izayoi was surprised like as though a sneak attack were to be launched at him and he quickly asked in return:

"……Oh? That fellow is a female?"

"YES! She's also golden haired but of a different hairstyle from

Leticia-sama and also a very attractive female!"

"……Oh? That fellow is quite close to you?"

"Not only close, she's also the one who let Kuro Usagi join the Community and be under her protection when Kuro Usagi was young becoming her benefactor! She also likes children, has a lively character and is very intelligent……is Kuro Usagi's idol."

Kuro Usagi stood up, squinting as she gazed upon the starry skies.

"No matter what happened…… she would always be safe and untouched---that's the kind of feeling that she gives to everyone. It's really very incredible. Hence, facing this kind of situation in the Community, Kuro Usagi should work hard and press forward to repay her debt in the past! And I would also want to introduce Izayoi, you guys[124] to the others, to live everyday better and more merrily than our current lives!"

"Nn!" Kuro Usagi set her determined encouragement for herself to work harder.

Izayoi on the other hand was keeping his silence and watching the night skies quietly.

Compared to earlier, his gaze seems to be much further than before but yet not seeing anything. The expression that was so unlike his character, it caused Kuro Usagi to feel a little worried.

"……Izayoi-san. What's the matter?"

"No……I'm just thinking which one was Altair."

Izayoi used his finger to trance along the starry skies, muttering in a way that it seemed like he were trying to change the topic.

Kuro Usagi who was beside him was pleased to point it out to him.

"Really now~ Altair is the first star of Aquila. It must be in that---"

---Just then, Kuro Usagi suddenly let out an "Eh?".

Izayoi had also immediately returned to his wits as he sat up abruptly.

Following that, a gust of ominous breeze of the night blew past the both of them. And if they hadn't been mistaken with their eyes---

Just a while ago, numerous stars had lost their radiance in the sky for a moment.

"……What was that just now?"

Izayoi furrowed his brows in astonishment.

However, the strange events were happening one after another.

---Be awaken, the golden whisper that's as lovely as an apple.

At the instant when they heard the ominous singing voice,

The music of the Golden Harp being strummed reverberated throughout [Underwood].

Part 3

As Leticia was heading towards the dormitories, a grumpy looking teenage maid, Percher, had come out to welcome her.

"……You are……"

"Good night there, pure blood Vampire-san…… I never thought that there would come a day that I would be wearing the same maid outfit as you."

Percher sighed gloomily. Leticia who initially couldn't understand why she could have run into Percher in this place was suddenly reminded of the Gift game contents that sprang to mind. And she started to infer though not after being boggled.

"…..Is that so? It's the meeting of all the winning conditions of [The PIED PIPER of HAMELIN] that successfully made you a subordinate?"

Leticia murmured, seeming to be in sudden realization.

---If one wanted to make a Demon lord submit to being a subordinate, one must obtain a complete victory in the Game that is forcefully hosted with the Demon Lord's [Authority of Host Master].

According to the original rules of [The PIED PIPER of HAMELIN], the game would have been cleared as long as one of the two winning conditions were met.

However due to changes to the rule during the [Trial Jurisdiction], it increased the difficulty of the clearing criteria to that of meeting both the winning conditions.

In the end, to carry out the contract of subordination, Percher was summoned to Little Garden once more.

"……that's how it is. But honestly speaking, I've never thought that the rules governing Little Garden and its Demon Lords were that strong to this sort of level. If it were just the physical body, I could still understand. But it was a case where the soul was supposed to be shattered and it turns out that the original look can still be restored. That, is something that hadn't cross my mind before."

That's right. Percher was summoned back into Little Garden even though the game was finally cleared by the shattering of her soul.

The person in question, Percher, was speechless as she too realized how absurd the power that resurrected her was.

But Leticia was still smiling as she squeezed Percher's shoulders.

"There's no need to look so down. Didn't a proverb say [With a lush green mountain remaining, there's no need to worry about finding firewood]? Although we might still have some misgivings at this point in time, but I will still welcome you gladly. And it's been a while since I started hoping for a new maid to join me---From now on, we're comrades fighting together under the same flag, so please take care of me, [Descendent of the God of Black Death]."

"……Hmph! Look at what you're saying, when you don't even have a flag in the first place!"

Leticia still held that warm smile of hers on her face.

In contrast, Percher just shrugged her shoulders disapprovingly.

"After placing your baggages, head over to Jin's room. It seems like you will have to go greet the [Host] later tonight as well."

Percher said all that she needed to say and flounced her maid skirt as she entered the dormitory. Although Leticia was smiling wryly, she just walked over to her own room without a word.

She had already entrusted Kuro Usagi with the task to find Izayoi and in that case, Kuro Usagi shouldn't be returning anytime soon.

……If she wanted to have a private conversation with Jin, now would be the only chance.

[I can only take this chance to tell Jin about Canaria being thrown into the outside world. It's precisely due to the fact that their Community was starting to grow in strength……that a discussion about its future had to be held now.]

Even though she had already set her heart to the task, Leticia was still quite unsure.

Opening her own room windows, she looked up to the starry skies through the gaps in the web like patterned tree roots.

Cherishing the memory of her companions in the past---Leticia murmured to herself mournfully:

"Canaria…… Was it you who sent Izayoi to the world of Little Garden?"

Leticia's monologue disappeared like a bubble as it didn't even get a chance to be heard by others.

In the past, they had once been under the same flag, carrying the same [Name], fighting in battles hand in hand with their comrades.

But now, she guessed that there wouldn't be a chance for her to fight alongside her in battle in the future anymore. For that person hadn't been able to make it back to her homeland and had already……quietly stopped her breath in another world outside of Little Garden.

"……"

Regarding that, Leticia was saddened of course. During the time when she was caught by the Demon Lord, hadn't she felt the same homesickness? For the sake of returning to her Community, she hadn't cared a bit about having to reveal the ugly side of herself, as many times as it may have required her to. Needless to say, Canaria who had been thrown to another world should also have felt the same.

Just that, she felt a sense of guilt for being the only one who made it back successfully. In addition, she had also learnt of her comrade's death in an unknown land…… It was no wonder that she was suffering from such a deep mental anguish.

Even so, the confusion that was born in her heart was similar to grief or of a higher intensity than that. Staring at the skies that seemed to be brimming with stars that blinked from time to time, Leticia was unable to contain it anymore as she vented out her thoughts into the night:

"For Canaria to be actually thrown to wander outside of the world of Little Garden……then…… what other types of misfortune may have befallen upon the rest of my comrades?!"

---That's right. And that was the true reason that tormented Leticia's heart.

Take Lily's mother for example, there was totally no news of her ever since the day that they were forcefully taken away by the Demon Lord.

If Lily's mother were to be thrown outside of the Cities within Little Garden, there might still be hope of finding her. But in the case where she were to be thrown to wander outside of this world of Little Garden, where all time frames and worlds will surely intersect at one point or another, then---

"It would be more difficult to find a person than to find a grain of sand from the sea of stars……"

Leticia muttered to herself……, her voice was so weak and soft that it could just dissipate into the wind. While her hands were subconsciously exerting force on the window frame that it seemed almost at the point of breaking under her hold.

Leticia who had already lived for many a hundred years[125] knew it clearer than anyone else how impossible a task that would be.

However, it shouldn't be kept as a secret for that wasn't much of a plan either. She had to tell the truth to Jin and have a careful discussion on the Community's direction in the future. For the current determination that had pushed all of them to work harder had all stemmed from the desire to save their comrades.

However, speaking realistically, that shouldn't be possible anymore. The Community had to change its direction. Even if her comrades might be angry and talk behind her back, Leticia was determined to carry out her act of persuasion even if her blood had to be spilt for the thought of suggesting such a thing.

She had even thought of ……If possible, the Community should be disbanded and rebuilt for that would allow it to have a new [Name] and [Flag].

[……But Kuro Usagi and Lily would surely cry upon hearing those words right……?]

On one hand, it was her foster mother.

On the other, it was her own parents.

Thinking about their reactions upon learning how they have worked hard over three years while clenching their teeth to bear with the pain of bereavement to be met with the reality that the reward they had worked for ceasing to exist, Leticia couldn't help but feel very miserable.

[However, this should have been done long ago. But in the end, I had been blinded by the dreams that Izayoi and the others seemed to inspire within me……and even led to giving them unnecessary pressure.]

Now was the time to restart the Community on the right path.

Leticia carried her determined heart as she turned away from the window.

---In the next moment, an ominous voice could be heard.

---Be awaken, the golden whisper that's as lovely as an apple.

Murmuring an "Eh", Leticia suddenly lost her strength.

At the same time, the three notes played by a harp caused her consciousness to become cloudy.

Leticia couldn't understand what was happening. But she struggled with the last ounce of strength in her disappearing consciousness to look behind her. And she saw a bard dressed in long robes giggling behind her.

"---Strategy Trojan Horse sure is successful! It's been some time, [Draculea Demon Lord]. Did it sound good, the music that holds the divinity of the Titans?"

"You……You scoundrel …… who are you……"

"Oh my, Oh my. It's only been a few months and you have forgotten our previous encounter…… that sure is a little too much. Oh well, not that you will have to care about these things very soon. Because---"

---you will soon revive as a Demon Lord once more.

Part 4

---O wake once more, the golden whisper that's as lovely as an apple.

O wake once more, the frame that has four corners reconciled.

Be it summer or winter, may the melody of the harp be carried to your ears

O wake faster than the sound of a flute, Clarsach Orga[126]---![127]

Hearing that chant like verse, Izayoi lifted his head abruptly.

"This verse……This is bad! Kuro Usagi! Where's the [Golden Harp] that was snatched from the titans currently?!"

"That……It should be under the charge of Sala-sama……"

"Break it immediately! That harp is---"

"---Yes, you are right. As you have surmised, that harp is a Tuatha De Danann divine weapon that has been summoned from the pages of ＜The Book of Invasions＞. It's a godly instrument that can perform a piece of awakening even if it stands in enemy's lands."

It was a low and slow voice that would make one think that it belonged to an old person. However it could have been a voice that was already tampered with to prevent the knowing of its source for it continued to echo in the surroundings.

Hearing the unidentified mysterious voice, Izayoi and Kuro Usagi had stood back to back and heightened their alertness.

However, the owner of the voice did not appear even after some time but only continued in a mocking voice targeted at Izayoi and the others:

"There's no need to hurry, [Highborn of Little Garden] and your comrades. Tonight is the night of the grand opening. First and foremost, I would like you to be happy about the revival of the Vampire princess---[Draculea Demon Lord]---!"

In a flash, the night skies were suddenly split into half. The night skies that were initially clear were now obscured by a curtain of dark clouds that were releasing lightning from time to time and causing the skies of [Underwood] to be dyed with a dusky hue.

And following the gap between the skies that have been split in two, Izayoi witnessed--- a scene from the Myths.

"That…Could it be…"

"That's right. It's the strongest life form that exists in Mythologies--- A Pureblood Dragon---!"

"GYEEEEEEEEEEEEYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaa

Just by that astounding roar that surpassed common sense, the whole of [Underwood] was shaken to its core. Although the dragon head could be barely made out, but its immense body was still obscured by the dense sea of clouds that swirled around it.

"Drag….Is that a Dragon?!"

Never experiencing such an immense pressure pressing down upon him like this before, Izayoi had also shuddered.

Following the appearance of the huge Dragon and the distortion of the Heavens, there was also a silhouette of what might be a huge castle that could be seen faintly on its back.

Flashes of lightning seem to respond to the roar of the huge dragon as they continued to strike downwards, burning up the tree roots that once covered the Underground City of [Underwood] within moments. And screams and wails could be heard traveling from the direction of the residential areas.

Then came the tolling of the bells from the sentry on duty, seeming bent on throwing the situation into more confusion.

"Ba…Bad News! The Titans have also started their invasion!"

"What!"

"Damn! For them to actually use this chance during such an emergency to add to the chaos!"

In addition to the roars of rage and shouts of commands that seem to undulate in the situation, the frenzied roar of the huge dragon and the flashes of lightning just caused [Underwood] to be shaken more intensely. As the dragon's roar shook the whole region, scales had also started to rain down upon the ground below it. And these scales started to morph into huge turtles or snakes that started to attack the City.

Seeing the abnormal situation below, her face had turned pale as she gave a cry:

"The formation of new races from the pieces of scale? It can't be a real pure-blooded dragon could it? How could a real one of the strongest race actually…… appear in the lower levels?!"

"Now's not the time to mutter to yourself up there! We have to get down immediately!"

Hearing Izayoi's admonishment, Kuro Usagi had also recovered her wits.

The both of them were just about to jump off the top of the tree, but something from the ground that was flying up caught their eyes--- A long robed bard and in the arms of the bard---

"Le…Leticia-sama!"

"Kuro Usagi….Izayoi!"

Upon hearing her name, Leticia's cloudy eyes slightly regained a little of its consciousness.

Leticia lifted her head to the skies and confirmed the huge dragon and castle in the skies for herself and finally got a grasp of the current situation.

[My seal on the [Authority of the Host Master] has been released! Could this person be……]

The true identity of the enemy caused Leticia to go pale immediately but she couldn't find the strength to struggle free from the holds of the bard's music.

Seeming to accept her fate, Leticia closed her eyes and shouted to the two below:

"---Aim for the THIRTEENTH…..SUN!"

"Eh?'

Both of them had perked their ears trying to catch the muffled shouts of Leticia.

While Leticia who was brought higher into the skies used all her strength to shout:

"The THIRTEENTH…Strike the Thirteenth Sun! That's the only way to clear my game---!"

Following the shouts that seemed like the death throes of one in pain, Leticia was swallowed by the huge dragon and fragmented into a patch of bright light. And from that light, it soon became pieces of black geass rolls…… the Geass Rolls of the Demon Lord that seemed like droplets of water that rained down upon the city of [Underwood].

< <GIFT GAME NAME: "SUN SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT in VAMPIRE KING"> >

List of Participant(s):

***All living things engulfed by the Circle of Animals.**

***#Upon the disappearance of the Circle of Animals, the game will be put on hold for an indefinite amount of time.**

Defeat Condition(s):

***None [Death of Participants will not be counted as being unable to clear the game]**

Prohibition(s):

***None.**

Punishment(s):

***A time limit will be imposed upon all the participants who have targeted and fought against the leader of the game.**

***The time limit will be a continuous time loop that occurs every ten days.**

***The choice of punishment will be chosen randomly from [Impaling] , [Crucifixion] , and [Immolation] .**

***The only way to be freed of the punishment would be to clear the game or during a pause in the game.**

***#The death of the participant is not included within the conditions to be freed from the punishment and they will continue to suffer indefinitely.**

Winning conditions of the Host:

***None.**

Winning conditions of the Participant:

***Kill the leader of the game: [Draculea Demon Lord] .**

***Kill the leader of the game: [Leticia Draculea] .**

***Gather the broken fragments of the constellations, and bring the Circle of Animals to present to the throne.**

***Following the proper procedure and using the Circle of Animals that have been restored to the throne as a guide, strike the heart of the revolutionist who is bounded in chains.**

Oath: ***I hereby respect the above conditions in the name of pride, our banner, and the Host Master to uphold this Gift Game.***

" " Seal

Afterwords

--- Those who are good at dealing with the teasing of others are good at being loved.

---Those who are good at teasing others are good with their life skills.

And the book that corresponds to the above(Joking) is the sincerely written piece of work about a modern parallel world fantasy --- <Mondaiji-Tachi ga Isekai kara kuru Soudesu yo? I see…Dragon Summoning>, in short, Volume three of the Problem Children series.

Everyone, it's been a while. I would like to really thank you for purchasing this book which I've spent the most time and energy upon. The Afterword this time is only one page. Ugu! If only I could write this number of pages every time, I wouldn't have to write any extra weird contents just to get it up to the quota!

Then, regarding the "Problem Children series", an advertising PV has been made on and posted up on "THE SNEAKER WEB". And I heard that as long as you win the Gift Game on that webpage, you can have a peek at Amano-san's drafts for the pictures! Even the pictures for those that were not shown in the light novel publications will be shown there!

So everyone, please take this chance to see all those characters that have not been shown in the pictures slotted in the book. Moreover, there's also a short story that has been posted up this time round too.

The fourth volume is estimated to be on sale by Spring tomorrow. As the Rabbit year comes to an end, we will be moving into the dragon year.

Wishing everyone a good year ahead!

Taro Tatsunoko

Words of the last picture:

Yō: Thank you for your hard work everyone! This is…… the backstage, the preview for the next volume!

Kuro Usagi:A huge mysterious Dragon suddenly appeared!

Mysterious enemy! Mysterious Castle! The curtains of the problem children's battle to save the kidnapped Leticia-sama story-arc will be drawn!

Izayoi: HngHng! To be able to deal with a huge dragon and a Demon Lord at the same time. That's really generous.

Asuka: Heh Heh. It sure does make one rub their fists in anticipation.

Yō: Nn! I will also work hard.

Jin:I…I will… also be more lively….Ooh.

Leticia: …… please don't die, everyone.

Kuro Usagi: Next Volume! [Defeat the 13th Sun]! Please look forward to it!

Rescuing of Leticia! The next volume is set to be published next spring!

Translation Notes and References

1. ↑ Wiki , Machine translated wikipage
2. ↑ [magref notes: Community Grounds is called HQ? Hmmm… anyways, note that this is the same as the Community Grounds that I usually term it as…]
3. ↑ [magref notes: What I'm trying to show here is his sniff of contempt but it wasn't said that it is contempt… so I will not write it too :p let you guys figure it out and if you don't you will look for the notes.]
4. ↑ [magref notes: The request was from Shiroyasha to be the bodyguard in Volume 2 for Salamandra and ensure that the festival go without a hitch…. Yeah that one…]
5. ↑ 神珍铁 (literally) translates to God-rare metal. I do not know a better term for that but if there is a better term, feel free to change it.
6. ↑ Volume 1, Izayoi managed to get the water from the water serpent/Shirayuki-hime
7. ↑ [magref notes: Oops seems like a big project is up again… yea Asuka is called Ojou-sama by Izayoi…always thought that it was Oujo-sama which means something close to your highness]
8. ↑ [magref TL NOTE: Mandrake, Mandragora, Maneater are all the same. It was said that once pulled out, the mandrake will scream and those who heard the screams either turns insane or dies on the spot.]
9. ↑ [magref notes: I'm guessing that this is Naruhodo? But oh well… it occurs frequently in the story and I've always placed it in English 'I see' or 'so that's how it is']
10. ↑ [magref notes: Stage here refers to Game stage, the location where Gift Games are hosted.
11. ↑ [magref notes: trophy here means the reward from competing in games, supposed to be a war trophy but yea this isn't war.]
12. ↑ In case you are unaware, a river is a flowing body of fresh water and a lake is a still body of freshwater.
13. ↑ [magref notes:Embarrassed because she had to be reminded by Izayoi.]
14. ↑ [magref notes: I think that's what she said… it saying everyone-sama but sounds really weird to leave it 50-50…]

15. ↑ Umehachin is basically Japanese pickled plums (Umeboshi) that were pickled with fish shavings (bonito) and Shiso Leaves. It is less salty than the traditional Umeboshi
16. ↑ Kombu is basically edible Kelp.
17. ↑ Sea Chicken is a famous canned food in Japan. It is made out of Tuna and other fish and the taste is similar to Chicken, hence the name.
18. ↑ [magref notes: shoji is the Japanese architecture of paper sliding doors/room dividers. Extras:If it were hard and opaque, it would be called fusuma architecture.]
19. ↑ [magref notes: Ok… placing of a keystone is a figurative phrase to mean that the final touches that makes the most importance. Keystone is the middle stone in a stone arch. The ch book used another phrase but I'm guessing that it sounds too ch to be a jap to ch translation of the phrase, so I used an English phrase.]
20. ↑ [magref note: 20% of the toll goes to Floor Master.
21. ↑ [magref note: the decoration (last word of this para…) refers to the creation of a conducive and attractive environment that would lure more Communities to set their base up here etc etc.]
22. ↑ [magref note: though it is not stated what they toasted, but it shouldn't be alcoholic in nature.]
23. ↑ [magref note: lols at bondage… lols… XD…. Dunno if you want to change it… there's no 'from bondage' in the real text. If it's the jap one, then I wouldn't know but… oh my…sounds real ecchi.../pedo Small Leticia in bondage?] BionicMeerkat here. Perfect gif for this->lol
24. ↑ This is a pun on Izayoi's (十六夜) name, which literally translates to 16th Night.
25. ↑ Original Chinese TL note: Calico cat was speaking in Kansai dialect for "I see" so it's said as "sayoka"(さよか) instead of something like "Naruhodo" (なるほど).
26. ↑ Scratching behind the ears is something that many dogs (or foxes in Mondaiji) enjoy. It is the place on top of the head directly where the ears connect to the head.
27. ↑ [magref note: well, this is just to clarify which part of the bath for there is no such term as bath pool in English so I used brackets.]
28. ↑ [magref note: this 'system' refers to the system that's carved on Yō's pendant. The Genetic system.]
29. ↑ [magref notes:actual meaning was Son of the Dragon but this case… son? Didn't seem to fit.]
30. ↑ Eudemons are friendly spirits. I originally intended to just

use “spirits” but Eudemons sound a lot cooler and nicer.

31. ↑ The author was probably referring to the sky goddess Nut who was known for a star-covered nude woman/cow arching over the Earth.
    [magref note: Earth is called Geb while Sky refers to Nut. Yep]
32. ↑ ”貧乏神”; Misfortune God
33. ↑ [magref note: it is said to be 茶点 which means refreshments/ sweets/ tea etc basically the stuff you eat with tea, ie taro cake, mochi,dango those kinds….so I simply came up with Japanese sweets to just cover it although it wasn’t specified to be Japanese]
34. ↑ Spoken in English
35. ↑ [magref note: I’ve been using Community Grounds all these while, I’ve seen words like Mansion, Headquarters etc used to describe it and I do not disagree with those. For the direct translation is shown to be Base or even a citadel. Anyways, I will just use the term [Community Grounds] until someone tells me what is best to replace it and it can be much easily found with this note.]
36. ↑ It means White Fox in Japanese http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/fox-inari-university-of-wiscon.htm
37. ↑ Ok… that one was really time eating…. Ukanomitama is said to be similar to Inari according to the ancient texts and might even be the same god/ different name due to different cultures… The direct translation of the text would be Imperial Soul of the Uka god, but it sounds really fishy… and my guess that they had a problem translating it to Chinese like how I tried to translate it to English… Ukanomitama is something that I added in that isn’t in the Chinese text for I’m not sure which the most precise translation is but just had this thought: This might be it and placed it there. And I prefer it to the direct translations. Here’s the link to know more about Inari and Ukanomitama http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inari_%C5%8Ckami Instead of using the direct translation, I will just use Ukanomitama.
38. ↑ Land lords not in the sense of the people in ownership of the land and collect rentals… these are the Elemental Lords of the land. In Taoist, we have an Earth god and for Jap, they have more than Inari I think… they are in charge of infrastructure and it’s stability.
39. ↑ Heralds---Gods have their own special guards/servants---all those are classified/translated as Heralds over here[Thanks to

Bareus for the term]… They are more than devotees and are trusted aides of the God. Yet, they are not equal in rank to be called comrades.

40. ↑ In the text, it was a master of sorts in crafts and I didn't really get the meaning of the word so I did a google on it… it gave 2 answers…. Sculptor and Alchemist. Being unable to decide on my own which one was the more accurate one… sure, sculptor but there was also the chance that it could have meant alchemist…. >.< yea so u get both.
41. ↑ Taro jelly---direct translation… but it seemed to be more like a pastry of sorts…taro-yam heres an example its taro cake , not yam cake for there's a difference in the Jap/Chinese version of the recipe… and I'm sure that the author is very much into Jap pastry not Chinese.. http://www.sueki.jp/images/imo_kansei.jpg
42. ↑ Spirit of Service if you are unsure what it really means, doesn't do any harm to know about it and have it :] http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ … p?id=19444
43. ↑ olm- a blind cave newt
44. ↑ A female singer http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/songstress
45. ↑ Translator originally had this as "shamisen". I changed it to "Dick" to complete the term for "any random people" we use, which is "Tom, Dick, and Harry." Please correct if the shamisen was intentional on the author's behalf... and then explain *why* it was intentional.
46. ↑ Fir Bolg, some ancient Ireland race that was overthrown by Tuatha Dé Danann um… I throw it here http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fir_Bolg anyways, this was found by versionf who messaged me on the forums and it coincided with the fact that South Side was truly an Irish custom influenced place. And apparently there really is a district that is called Fir Bolg, named after their Irish legends in THIS WORLD. Searched it up on the Chinese wiki and saw how they told of regions being named after famous Celtic myths.
47. ↑ 风天 = Vayu, a Hindu wind deity. Also one of the 12 deva guardians of Buddhism 十二天
48. ↑ [Man Killers] I'm sure that this is the second time I used it and it's not an error. Man eaters kill Man for food. Man Killers kill for the fun/need to rid themselves of some curse.
49. ↑ in the text, it is said more politely as 贵共同体 [valued Community] instead of Jin's Community but I do not know how to fit it in without it sounding weird. Leaving it for others to think up a solution :p and I usually don't like weird

looking sentences for it disrupts my flow of reading/thoughts when I translate. Even for the word you, it's the respectful one… zzz I'm not sure if I'm lacking in vocab but I've not come across a word 'you with respectful tone' in English.

50. ↑ oishi-tasty in Japanese, neh is just the sound effect
51. ↑ I'm not sure if it is put in that way, but it is basically to say that reality is cruel and that the game of reality is life itself… I'm not going to explain further for one should have his own judgements on why Asuka/Ayesha(not even going to say who…just think…) decides to say it in that way.
52. ↑ Container- a wooden box, size undefined…
53. ↑ burl- a tumor like protrusion in a tree that is very old
54. ↑ huh is a sound… not sure if I need to put a note.
55. ↑ Dryad- tree spirits
56. ↑ Six digits- im just going to use it as digit. I'm not sure if other's use it too… can't remember too well, so I'm making a note: All Community grounds have a number attached to them. The larger the number the lousier it is in the hierarchy. Number1 is the biggest duh…
57. ↑ temperament refers to the aspects of an individual's personality that are often regarded as innate rather than learned.
58. ↑ Text translation would be cardinal. The reason for it being blue to pink in the anime is explained in Volume7…>.< or if you want to know, I will only say in forum spoilers…
59. ↑ I give up on trying to make it any different…. I will just write Kuro Usagi's lines all in third person from now on.
60. ↑ http://oald8.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/dictionary/storey
61. ↑ Search Chrome of Hitman Reborn to see what a pineapple shaped head means. http://reborn.wikia.com/wiki/Chrome_Dokuro
62. ↑ I got no idea how a pineapple shaped hairstyle can swing but it is said so… my guess is bobbed up an down…
63. ↑ Celestial globe is a model which maps the coordinates of the stars with the Earth as the center.
64. ↑ Nekomimi – (neko) cat, (mimi)ears
65. ↑ Um titan swinging a large sword at you… no problem??? Huh? Is there something wrong with the translation, you might be thinking…. Same here… I wonder wats wrong with KuroUsagi's mind!!!!
66. ↑ I'm not supposed to explain it actually… but I am. The lower regions actually refer to the surface of [Underwood], outside the Underground City as Yō and Asuka are currently

in the air and overlooking the whole battlefield.

67. ↑ Sceptre- a symbolic ornamental staff or wand held in the hand of a ruling Monarch as an item of royal or imperial insignia
68. ↑ Tumbler, a toy that rights itself after toppling due to the weight at the bottom of the oval shaped toy. If thrown in a certain angle, it will keep rolling due to the momentum… >.< lazy to explain all the mechanics behind that… just take it as they rolled.
69. ↑ Item support- my guess would be that if they needed arrow replenishments…water, snacks to power up or maybe a Rumble ball or two…>.< If I were the one to write, I would have made sure that they provided emergency first aid treatment after retreating a little…but I'm a translator…
70. ↑ Masquerade mask- ball masks, ones that range from normal metal ones to highly decorated ones to show statuses… but they are all for the same reason: to hide one's identity.
71. ↑ Some general knowledge of moon phrases: fullest moon fifteen(十五) of each month, one day after, you do the math.
72. ↑ City of Water, a term for Venice. It was written as such so I didn't write it as Venice.
73. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iguazu_Falls There's no demon in the real story though… it's just a god who condemned a mortal woman whom he fell for to be under the waterfall eternally with the mortal lover whom she had fled with.
74. ↑ Nordic Giants: the Jotnar http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_j%C3%B6tnar_in_Norse_mythology Just for fun…
75. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebor_Gab%C3%A1la_%C3%89renn
76. ↑ 来寇之书 is actually "Lebor Gabála Érenn", the author calls it "Erin Grimoire". The "Erin" is translated literally, it probably spells as Erenn.[from versionf] The reason why it was slightly tweaked to be Erin Grimoire might stem from the fact that the author likes to make minor changes and say it is different. Not the first time i noticed this tactic. XD
77. ↑ Sound of chair moving back violently, need advice on the sound.
78. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_one-eyed_creatures_in_mythology_and_fiction Balor's eye
79. ↑ Casualty collection point, the place where they pick up the injured from the battlefield and give light treatments/minor ops, unable to do major operations which would have to be sent to another larger place ie. The hospital.

80. ↑ Swallowed a yellow lotus is an idiom to describe a person being unable to voice her woes due to something that is clogging it up. Suffering in silence. The Yellow Lotus bud before it blooms is quite big and hence you would get choked if you really tried something like that.
81. ↑ [Baron Croix] was the term given in the book. Note that the author likes to play around with the names for true names hold power. And this one… you wouldn't really want to anger it would ya? Only ones he didn't play with are the ones he know are really on his side ^-^…
82. ↑ Loa[gods] a term in Haitian Vodou. A syncretic religion practiced chiefly in Haiti.
83. ↑ Guniee[World of gods]
84. ↑ Revolving lantern---Uses the laws of air convection currents to turn the turbine like top of the lantern and and causes the lantern to revolve… that was in the past… In the present day, they just fix an electric fan…Pictures can be seen moving pass as it revolves on its axis. http://www.craftster.org/pictures/data/500/medium/8095_28Sep09_ml-cow.jpg
85. ↑ Miniature landscaping… a kind of craft that creates small models similar to that of miniature gardening
86. ↑ In his element- something that makes him feel happy or comfortable with.
87. ↑ Megane - glasses/spectacles
88. ↑ Kami-sama--- God-sama.
89. ↑ There might be a pun here, not sure if it's the same in Japanese but the word concussion in Chinese looks very similar to the act that Kuro Usagi was causing…. The Chinese character for tremor.
90. ↑ Three different ways---Asuka and Kuro Usagi are the very polite ones…. While Yō is the laconic one… um yea… since they are of different characters, that would have caused them to do it differently from the other. So it isn't a translational error.
91. ↑ See-saw effect. Yes I know that it sounds like economics but well in this place, it just means that it has an inverse relationship. Increased intensity＞＞＞Decreased fun due to the fact that no one seems to be winning.
92. ↑ "Face your feelings candidly" 『率直面対感动』 I'm not to sure if it is the correct way to put it… but I will give a brief explanation of what it means and see if someone can suggest a better phrase for the description. In a direct translation, it would be directly facing the feelings of being touched. 'Touched' in the sense of being in awe and appreciation of

nature, other people and things around you, which I think of as feelings in general but it isn't that simple as just plain feelings. And 'directly facing' refers to being honest and not hiding it away behind one's own fabrication, trying to hide away one's true feelings from being noticed by others.

93. ↑ 精灵- sometimes, in the text this means faerie, but it can also mean spirits, elves and more… In this context, it should be a spirit… unless someone researches on it to tell me otherwise.
94. ↑ Hyperbole- It refers to an exaggeration of one's own point, strong feelings to create a strong impression. Yes, it is supposed to be in my vocab notes but just added it here as well.
95. ↑ Sexual harassment. This is one of the things I hate about translating the novel… but I will still translate these parts real direct. >.<
96. ↑ Jockey---the rider/ knight hmmm 骑师 just has those kinds of translations. But I just don't think that he's a knight like Faceless :P which knight falls off his own steed? :X
97. ↑ 『精灵役使者』Okay… direct translation is [Fae Servitude Owner/user/master] but it will be called Genier Contractor. Thank you to lens for clearing it up on the forum!
98. ↑ Just a note yea it's a note. Looks like it isn't a typo after all it's really [Grimm Grimoire Hameln]… which means that the author did intend for it to be a missing 'I' to make it a different spelling. Seeking confirmation from the Japanese sources.
99. ↑ This is a name that has been made from the pronunciation of her name. Pronunciation of it in jap is Pest. But since the author is playing with pronunciation and did not write Pest explicitly, the translator is also feinting ignorance and calling her Percher. At the end of volume 6, a poll will be held to decide if her name is to be called Pest or Percher.
100. ↑ Tuatha De Danann who are the descendants of goddess Danu, settled in Beltaine. It is said that they came from the sky ("high air"), and brought four magical treasures from the four magical cities. Fir Bolgs engaged them the first battle conducted in Magh Tuireadh, and later engaged the Fomorians for the second battle in Magh Tuireadh. From here we can see that the newly introduced residents are better than those indigenous tribal gods. [Translated text… so I just put it here] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danu_%28Irish_goddess%29
101. ↑ Celtic Culture: Dagda, chief of the fairies and the god of

plenty, called forth the seasons on a harp that played itself. Druid bards (ancient Celtic priests) played harps, and their songs passed on their lore. (Random search that hit jackpot) http://www.karynhenleyfiction.com/Karyn ... _Myth.html

102. ↑ Similar to continental plates in their movement… it isn't stated clearly so I did not want to do so in the translation either. But just some information on how it move. When two pieces collide, they can either fold upwards to form fold mountains or 1 slide under another, in this case it would make a large noise since it's moving fast :O
103. ↑ Clarification on celestial spirit: also known as star spirit level.
104. ↑ Causality- the relation between the cause and the effect
105. ↑ Hmmm it's not really her past, more of her bad experience… but I'm not too sure how to fit that in with my limited vocab… >.<
106. ↑ OK… I admit, I removed a little of her character I think… but I cant think up of a way to fit it in nicely…. There should be a weird quirk to her words like ya, desu or something? But oh well… I don't know what she looks like but I bet she's cute like any other anime character :p
107. ↑ If I used direct translation, it would be basta** and not baka. But it didn't seem like a cute imouto character that she kinda act in the story… So just bear with my selfish changes to Baka :p
108. ↑ Ok… this is more of math…its more about planes and intersections(like picture I provided) but I will just put it in layman terms if it sounds too complicated: When you poke a needle into a piece of cloth, the point where it pierces through is the point of intersection. With possibilities represented as needles, try to poke as many needles into that same hole. On one side of the cloth, it looks like all the needles are going into the same hole while on the other, the needles are moving away from each other, away from the hole. Yep that's how the possibilities join and diverge. http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/c ... ng.svg.png
109. ↑ Ok…. Explanation time: Split the sun cycles into two. In short, there is equinoxes in March and September, Solstice in June and December and how it gets divided is that there will now be a pattern of Summer solstice,autumn equinox and winter solstice, spring equinox. Wiccans believe that the veils are especially thin for this point of the year.
110. ↑ My use of the terms: 太阳的主权Sovereignty of the Sun 支配权the Authorities of administration over

111. ↑ ToraNingen- tigerman
112. ↑ Translator note: I don't know why some parts were made to look like first person and some parts were left in third person without the usual brackets to denote the difference… but anyways, I just changed this portion to first person. Totally changed all third person random portions to first person.
113. ↑ Modern English translation: Boys and girls with wondrous talents and much distress, I address you:
If you strive to test your Gifts,
You shall cast aside your family, friends, possessions, everything in the world of yours.
And come forth to our [Little Garden].
114. ↑ Yes if you have guessed it this part [sense of awe and appreciation] is the feeling that Canaria taught him.
115. ↑ Phylogenetic tree-is a branching diagram or "tree" showing the inferred evolutionary relationships among various biological species or other entities Genome-entirety of an organism's hereditary information.
116. ↑ Facsimiled - made a copy of.
117. ↑ 别那样说嘛- I put it as [Oh well, chill a little can't ya?]… the google translation was { Do not like brains} lols…if you have a better translation, I want to hear them, just post at forums and I will see if it fits the situation.
118. ↑ Self-understanding- knowing one's own capabilities, ie in this sense, Izayoi means they are stupid to try do something when he's around…XD
119. ↑ I decided that from now on if the word [感动] appears, I will put the translation of it in the context of the line and that phrase side by side… so you get to see how many variations it can be used in and how the author plays with that phrase all over the story. Google translate->moving, touched, affect, inspired, throb, sensation.
120. ↑ Look at Translator Note 5 (Note 120 in Full Text)
121. ↑ Look at Translator Note 5 (Note 120 in Full Text)
122. ↑ Look at Translator Note 5 (Note 120 in Full Text)
123. ↑ Look at Translator Note 5 (Note 120 in Full Text)...Looks like magref wasn't lying about the numerous variations - BionicMeerkat
124. ↑ I'm not sure if I should explain this part since I'm not supposed to: you guys means Yō, Asuka, while the others refer to the former members of No Name
125. ↑ Many a hundred years---- a few centuries/thousands of years even… need someone to check if it's the correct way of the phrase…

126. ↑ Clarsach Orga – Irish word for golden harp :X I'm playing around again…
127. ↑ Uaithne, also known as "the Four Angled Music", was a richly ornamented magic harp made ofoak which, when the Dagda played it, put the seasons in their correct order; other accounts tell of it being used to command the order of battle

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